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MAY/JUNE 1983 NUMBER 63

THE SPACE GAMER

THE MAGAZINE OF ADVENTURE GAMING

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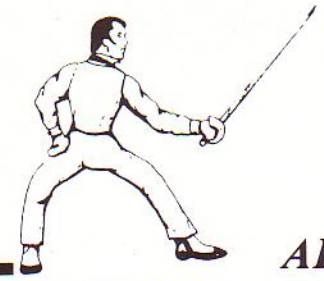

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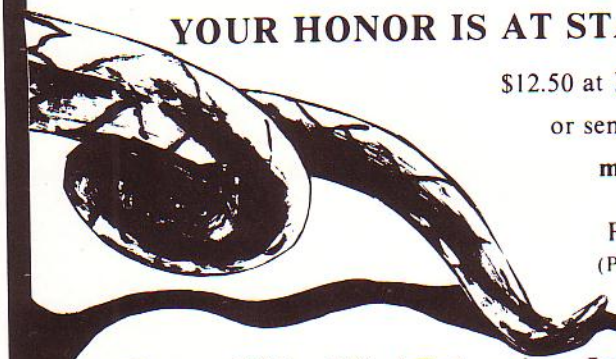

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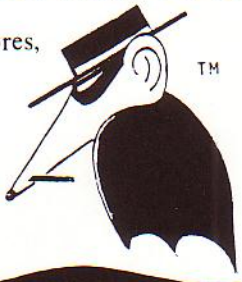

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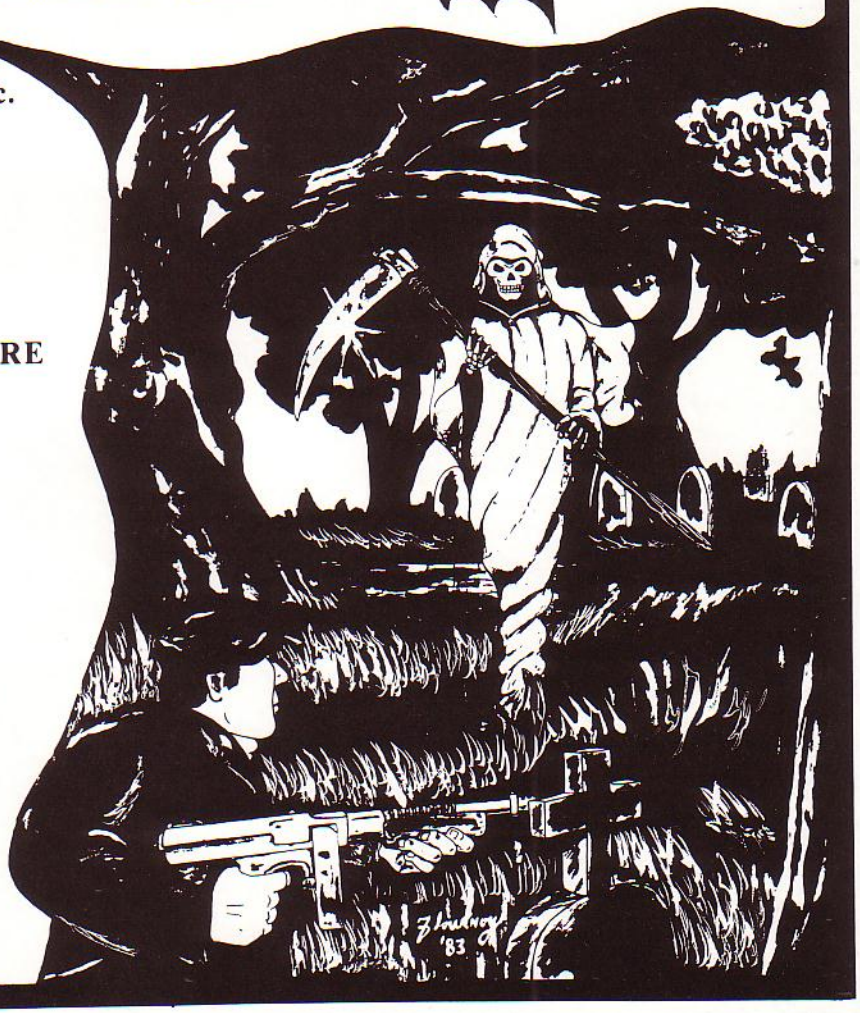

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THE SPACE GAMER

NUMBER 63 — May-June 1983

IN THIS ISSUE

We've got a nice grab-bag issue for you this month: solitaire SF boardgaming, spy RPG, fantasy RPG, PBM featured reviews, survey results, and more. Since, next month (as you probably all know by now), *Space Gamer* will be bi-monthly and feature only science fiction gaming material — alternating with its sister publication, *Fantasy Gamer,* which will concentrate on fantasy gaming pieces — we decided to give you as even a mix as possible this time.

Of particular interest to you industry watchers this month will be John Rankin's interview with TSR's Kevin Blume (learn all about conventions, miniatures, GAMA negotiations, bendable toys, and more) and this issue's *Scanner.* (There are times when I wish for a dull month to come along . . .)

—Aaron Allston

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ALONE IN SPACE

Science Fiction and the Solitaire Gamer

by Matthew J. Costello

I was supposedly in a place called Davie, Florida. I guess that there must have been a town somewhere, but Davie appeared to be nothing more than a strip of highway on the way to the Seminole Indian Reservation. And I doubt that many people driving by on their way to purchase tax-free cigarettes from the Indians ever noticed the small shop near the center of a shabby six-store mall.

It was, unbelievably, a branch of The Compleat Strategist – the gamer's Mecca in New York City. But what in the world was it doing in Davie?

For some reason, I never asked. But I did stop and browse. I was to be alone in Florida for quite a while and I wanted something to keep me busy. After looking around, I asked the clerk if he could recommend some good solitaire games.

He went to the shelves and returned with three games: ***Barbarian Prince***, ***Intruder***, and ***Ogre***.

Now, Dwarfstar's ***Barbarian Prince***, as great as it is, was familiar territory. The Metagaming *MicroQuests* were similar, even though Arnold Hendrick provided some unique mechanics in ***Prince***. But ***Intruder*** and ***Ogre*** were something brand-new for me.

B. Dennis Sustare's ***Intruder*** (published by Task Force Games) was obviously based on the film *Alien*. An alien is brought onto a space ship; it escapes, metamorphoses, and eats almost everybody up. Sustare took the basic situation and created a nail-biter of a game. More often than not, after the Intruder was immune to freezing, immune to fire, and cloning all over the place, I'd panic. I'd gather my beleaguered band of humans together and tear off for the escape shuttle and guess who'd be waiting there for them?

Steve Jackson's ***Ogre*** provided a different kind of science-fiction play. You could program the Ogre to attack your Command Post in a variety of ways. Then you tried to stop it with your Heavy Tanks, Missile Launchers, infantry, and those blessedly useful GEVs. And the Ogre was only as good as your program. Send it straight towards the Command Post and it was pretty easy to stop it. But have it zig-zag, ramming on some occasions, using its missiles for maximum effect, and then the Mark V Ogre was almost unbeatable.

So solitaire gaming became my thing. I went on to devise ways that multi-player games could be played alone, and continually searched the hobby store shelves for a promising solitaire game.

Recently there has been a rash of new solo games with science-fiction themes. There have also been some multi-player games that work excellently as solos. Let's look at the new designed-for-solitaire games.

In Dwarfstar's ***Star Smuggler***, I had suspected a "cosmic rehash" of the system used in ***Barbarian Prince***. But that's before I knew B. Dennis Sustare had designed it. True, there's a rulebook for procedures and an events book for encounters, just like ***BP***. But Sustare has added elements of role-playing and intriguing rules that pertain to the problems of interstellar travel.

There are, for example, many different ways to travel in this game. You can hyperjump from one system to another. You can use a land scooter to get around on the surface of the planet. You can walk around, if you have to. There's even a smaller ship, should you lose your starship to the repossessors.

And while I agree with the recent review in *The Space Gamer* – flipping between rules and events books grows cumbersome – I think the range of play makes up for it. As Duke Springer, Star Smuggler, you have a lot of options which give the game a real role-playing feel. You begin to think that there's a way to beat the game, make the "big deal," if only you can stay out of trouble. (I *know* how to win . . . I've just got to smuggle the religious fanatics back to their home planet of New Karma without losing my ship. Somehow, I just never get there . . .)

Fantasy Games Unlimited is heavily involved in the role-playing field and even their boardgames reflect this. ***Star Explorer***, designed by Leonard H. Kanterman and Douglas Bonforte, is designed for solo play with rules and victory conditions to govern multi-player games.

It uses a system similar to FGU'S ***Oregon Trail***, namely rolling for encounters as you enter a hex, but it has a vastly enlarged scale of decision-making. One has various options for every encounter: Asteroids, Radiation Storms, Pirates, Traders, Zangid Battleships, etc. Once you make it to a planet, you have three encounters on the planet, determined by the planet's basic make-up. There are ten different kinds of planets, from Aquatic to Volcanic, each with its own array of possible events. Resolving these events successfully is what the game is about and there are plenty of options for the player to consider and utilize.

In addition, ***Star Explorer*** provides a simple and exciting combat system that's more than just rolling dice and looking at

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a chart. You can choose what weapons to use, how many shields to employ (and when to employ them) and you can even use overdrive to try and run from a Zangid Dreadnought. How you marshal your fuel will often determine success in battles. A critical hit feature adds flavor to the space battles.

While ***Star Explorer*** may lack the variety of situations found in ***Star Smuggler*** and its role-playing aspects, it offers an interesting challenge with plenty of room for risk taking. And the combat display on the mapboard gives a real feel of interstellar conflict.

Boarding Party (by Task Force Games) is, to some extent, a follow-up to an earlier, successful Task Force game design – ***Intruder.***

Boarding Party uses a random (and hidden) movement system like ***Intruder.*** The situation has similarities with the previous game, except that the situation has been reversed. Now there are guard robots hunting the human invaders (as opposed to the humans chasing the Intruder). The human player has to enter the four-level Destructor ship, open the computer-locked doors, and enter the Computer Center to destroy it. Meanwhile, the robots try to find them . . .

. . . Which leads to the game's biggest solitaire problem. I found it too easy to get into the Computer Center while avoiding robot contact. When you enter the Center, the robots zero in on the humans. But it's too late. The humans will usually have enough time to destroy the computer and win the game.

Nevertheless, I've returned to the game even though I scored an easy victory. Why? Because the situation is *interesting.* Sneaking into the ship, trying to get to Level Three before the powerful guard robot stumbles upon you . . . it's fun and a good example of what solitaire gaming is all about.

But to make the game more challenging I would add some rules to the game:

1) Whenever combat occurs on a level, all robots on that level should head directly for the scene of combat. This will make picking off the robots one-by-one a little harder.

2) Require the humans to get off the Destructor Ship by exiting the airlocks that they entered. This rule could be a tough one. There'll be a lot of robots heading for the humans once they're in the Computer Center.

3) Lastly, to make the game really tricky, require that all the repair robots be destroyed as well.

And what about multi-player games that work well as solos? I've enjoyed Metagaming's ***Invasion of the Air Eaters*** but found that the invaders became too easy to beat. Fortunately, Metagaming's sequel, ***The Air Eaters Strike Back,*** is a tougher game altogether.

Car Wars plays well solitaire, especially if you use an arena scenario and a variety of vehicles. Mix up a Joseph Special with a couple of monster cycles in a debris-strewn arena, and you've got yourself a real demolition derby.

Yaquinto's ***Attack of the Mutants*** was one of the first multi-player games I tried solo and, due to the mindless rapaciousness of the mutants, it worked wonderfully.

On a tactical level in deep space, Yaquinto's ***Shooting Stars*** has some exciting solitaire scenarios. However, the realistic control panel is rather complex for solitaire play, rendering the advanced scenarios for multi-player use only.

And I'm sure there are more potential solos out there that I haven't seen. One thing you can be sure of is that there will be more games designed for solitaire play released in the future. The solitaire gamer might be alone in space, but down here on terra firma he's got lots of company.

CLUSTER

Cluster is a P.B.M game of command management writ against the stellar vastness. Players assume the role of a "world leader" of a planet of one of the seven primary, or starfaring races. You have control of the economics, diplomacy, exploration, colonization, and military affairs of their world. Each race has its own strengths and weaknesses. Races have different weapons, propulsion, social order, and technology. Planning and realistic, logical, decision making are the tools of success - and survival. Each turn costs $1.50 and there are no deadlines to meet; moves are resolved as they come in. Cost for rules, game materials and initial set-up is $10.00, the first three turns are free. For more information write.

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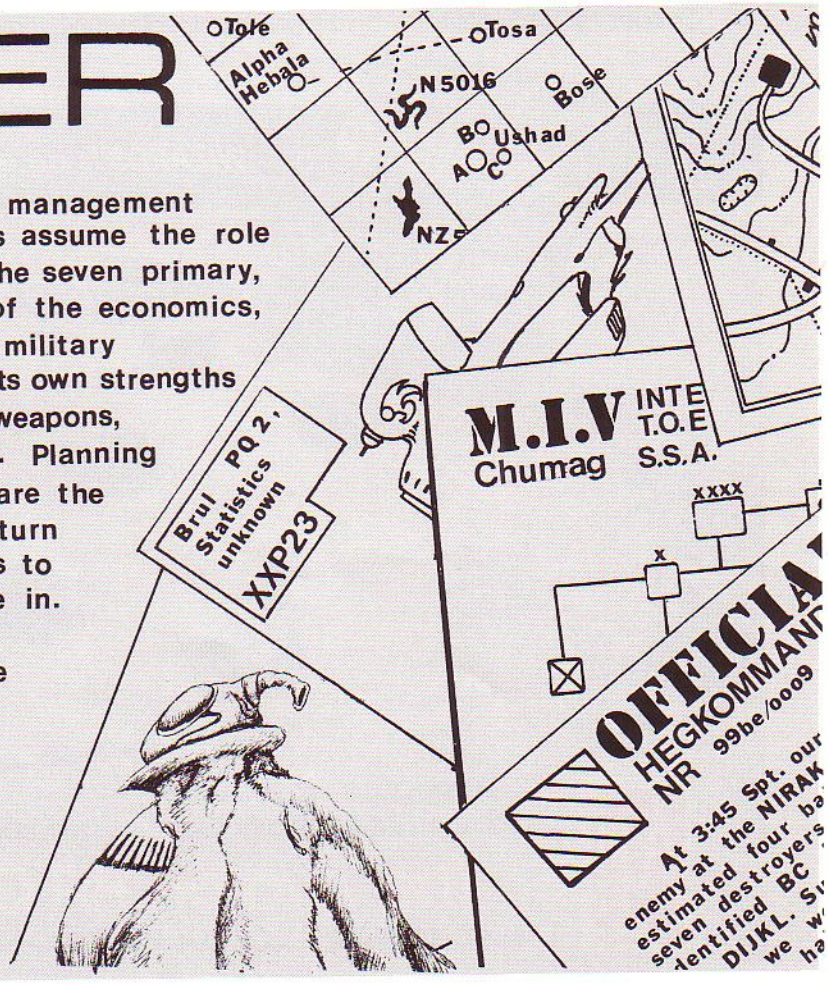

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STAR MAIL:

Three New PBM Space Games

by W.G. Armintrout

Galactic-scale science fiction games seem to do well in play-by-mail. There certainly have been a lot of them, and many are among the best games the PBM field has to offer. The past few months have seen the debuts of three exciting new space games, all different.

In alphabetical order, they are:

Galactic Conflict

From Flying Buffalo, Inc. $5 set-up fee, $3.50 per turn. Designed by Charles Gaydos. Moderated by computer. At least two players per game; monthly, biweekly and weekly turn-around times are available. (Weekly is possible only if you can get access to the Source computer network and there's a 50¢ charge per turn.) Game length is random but at least 15 turns. Begun 1982.

Galactic Conflict must be the "ugly duckling" at Flying Buffalo. There has been little advertising for the game. Turnsheets haven't been printed. No one at FBI seemed enthused when Schubel & Son suggested a comparative review between this game and ***Star Venture*** (the people at Flying Buffalo carefully explained that ***Galactic Conflict*** was an "outside" rather than an "in-house" design).

Therefore I didn't expect much when I entered the game. Fortunately, I was surprised – ***Galactic Conflict*** is one of the best little science fiction games I've seen in a long time.

Each player starts out with a photocopy of a computer-drawn hex-map of the galaxy, and a computer print-out listing his possessions: one homeworld (worth 10 Economy points), 30 Attack Forces, 20 Defense Forces, 10 Probes and 100 Fortifications.

The goal is to have the most points at the end of the game. Civilian Projects produce one victory point per turn for their current owners (and do nothing else). There are three ways to get them: find them on neutral worlds, build your own, or (of course) steal them from your neighbors.

A player's strength can be measured by the Economy ("econ") points he can muster. These points may be used each turn to build military forces: Probes, one-way ships which provide data on unowned worlds; Fortifications, immobile static defensive units; Defense Forces, mobile defense units; and Attack Forces, mobile but expensive units which both attack and defend. Econ points may also build Civilian Projects or, if left entirely idle, may raise their world's econ value by one.

All units except Fortifications and Civilian Projects may travel from world to world. Forces travel three hexes per turn, and may not change their course en route. There is no way to intercept moving forces, so there is no such thing as a perimeter defense in the game. Units which move to a world owned by another player are captured, unless they are Attack Forces specifically attacking that world.

Combat is simple, but with a twist. The number of Attack Forces is compared to the number of all defending forces. The greatest number wins the battle. All losers are destroyed. But here's the rub: the winner's losses are figured by squaring the number of losing units and dividing by the number of victorious units. Ten Attack Forces would win against six Defense Forces and three Fortifications, but the victor would lose $(6+3)^2/10 = 8$ of his attackers! In short, you need good odds to avoid being whittled away – and the higher the number of enemies you expect, the higher the odds you'll need.

Other details: Econ points may build a one-way, one-turn Gate to any other star. Players may destroy their own Civilian Projects and Econ points to keep them out of enemy hands. Diplomacy, essential to win, is done on 3x5 cards ("diplomatic messages") exchanged between players (who can also trade telephone numbers and addresses for faster communications). Players may also choose any eight-letter label as their player name.

Each turn's instructions are sent to Flying Buffalo in a simple, easily learned code. "M,27,231,A,3" translates as "Move three Attack Forces from world 27 to world 231."

Flying Buffalo then responds with a plain but serviceable print-out listing the player's overall forces, status of each world owned, probed or fought at, and a listing of players met and their current scores.

Galactic Conflict is a homely but elegant game of science fiction conquest. There is a masterful blend of options in production, military campaigning and logistically structuring an empire. I give it my highest recommendation – particularly for those who have never played PBM before. I do wish the price were lower.

Starlord

From Flying Buffalo, Inc. $5 set-up fee, $2.50 per turn. Designed by Mike Singleton. Moderated by computer. Up to 50 players per game; turn-around time two weeks. Open-ended game. Begun 1983 in America.

From ugly duckling to Cinderella. ***Starlord*** is the game, originally run by Mike Singleton in England, which I raved about in TSG 49. Flying Buffalo is now running the game in this country. From the 22-page crystal-clear rulebook to the *color* computer print-outs, this is obviously the game Flying Buffalo is pushing.

Each player represents a starlord in the days of a dying "empyr." The eventual goal is to capture the Throne Star and become the Emperor, after which you get to play for free and receive a 5' square galactic map printout. Until someone else dethrones you, that is.

The game is built around each player's "Command Ship." Each player receives each turn, a computer-drawn map (not a list!) of all stars within seven astrals of his Command Ship, and detailed information on his forces and worlds within that range. Ships within range of the Command Ship may move and attack, but cannot move further than seven astrals from the Command Ship. If the Command Ship runs out of fuel, none of the little ships may move.

All of this means that the player knows *nothing* beyond seven astrals of his Command Ship! To conquer, he must

foray away from his Base Star . . . leaving it open to pillage (which he won't even know about until he returns!).

The combat system is simple but fun. All ships in range of the Command Ship must be given a tactic each turn, in case combat occurs – Probe, Raid, Advance, or Attack (offensive) or Retreat, Ambush, Defend or Stand (defensive) – indicating acceptable losses before retreat. But retreating ships may be captured if their retreat star is captured – a prime way to bolster forces.

Production and other logistical points are handled automatically by the computer – there are no Raw Materials to shuttle. Stars are classified by function: Data Stars, Supply Stars, City Stars, etc.

Starlord was designed to be easy to play. The turnsheet is printed at the end of the computer print-out, with every option listed. The player has only to fill in the numbers of ships and their tactics; there are no codes, and this takes less than three minutes.

The printout itself is the finest I've seen. It's in color, with different colors marking each player's stars and forces. Flying Buffalo has even made some slight improvements over the English version's printouts, listing everything in a convenient place on the sheet.

The rules are identical to the English version. Players do *not* automatically receive the name of any player whose Command Ship appears on their print-out; Diplomatic Messages may be exchanged, however.

Starlord continues to receive my highest recommendation – a masterpiece of game design, ridiculously easy to play yet moderately challenging. Those who have never tried PBM could start here. I have only two quibbles: You can't choose your player name (you are named after your Base Star), and the map should have a circular frame.

Star Venture

From Schubel & Son. $5 set-up fee per ship, 25¢ per action ($2 minimum per turn), $1.50 per battle report, 50¢ per message. Rulebook is $5. Designed by George V. Schubel. Moderated by computer; instructions sent on bubble cards. All players are in the same game; no turn deadlines (turn-around times of less than two weeks can be achieved). Open-ended game. Begun 1982.

In the 125-star ***Star Venture*** galaxy, each player is the captain of one or more starships. It's almost a role-playing game; there are no victory conditions, and players may utilize their ships to achieve whatever goals they desire.

Players start out with their new ships at the starport of Imperia, a GM-enforced haven from combat. They may buy as many ships as they can afford (one set-up for each), but are limited to starting with destroyers or medium freighters. (Other ships – everything from scouts and light freighters to tankers and battle globes – must be bought with *game* wealth, as opposed to the real-world kind.)

Players name their own ships (with a variety for which ***Star Venture*** is becoming notorious), and decide what to carry on board. Ships are divided into six sections – control, exploration, weapon, engine, support and cargo – which are each rated for interior space. Items which can be carried on board – crew, troops, life supports, shields, labs, engines, weapons, vehicles, food and fuel – are rated for the space they take. (A medium freighter, with 50 points of engine section, could take three engines – leaving 20 points for fuel – or four engines and only 10 fuel spaces.) Ships are rated in terms of the damage they can take in battle before detonation and minimum crew size necessary.

Once the ship has been configured, it is controlled by the "actions" its player files. There are 30 possible ship actions: movement (in-system, star jumps, landing and takeoff), scanning (eight types), combat (versus ships, colonies or ground parties), transfer and marketing of goods, repairs, and starting new ground parties or colonies.

Many actions require food, fuel, or both. The exact amounts are figured using the simple algebraic equations provided, though a random factor is always present. Speaking as a captain who lost one ship stranded in space without fuel and a second ship left without a crew, it is crucial to watch your supplies.

The universe consists of 125 solar systems in a 5x5x5 cube, inconveniently numbered from 1 to 125. Solar systems contain any number of worlds, each composed of ten sectors. When explored, each sector yields ratings for life density, food, mining and fuel potential, and friendliness on the part of the locals.

Worlds form the setting for the two other units in ***Star Venture***: ground parties and colonies. Ground parties can explore planets, recruit aliens, collect biological samples, and fight. They are a cheap way to explore a planet (you need only feed the explorers, not the entire ship's company).

Colonies are what people fight over. A colony is the center for production. A colony with a starport also contains a reasonably free marketplace where players may buy and sell goods. Colony owners may keep their goods "active" (ready for immediate use) or "inactive" (for sale, if the colony has a starport). Owners have only limited control of their marketplace, but may establish a secret code controlling discounts for those who know it.

"Many players have come into the game from Schubel & Son's *Tribes of Crane*, and a more competitive and cunning collection of players would be hard to find."

Players start the game knowing little about combat, learning only by painful experience. There are three weapon systems in ship-to-ship combat: missiles, one-shot weapons which are immediately launched upon combat; fighters, similar to missiles but reuseable; and beams. Shields provide limited defense, absorbing damage in their ship section, while jammers may destroy incoming missiles or fighters. Once combat is initiated, it is controlled by the computer. The results are sent in a special Battle Report, a well-done plain language report on the combat.

Ships may also attempt boarding operations, or bombard colonies and ground parties. Colonies equipped with forts may counter-bombard the ships.

Given the open style of ***Star Venture***, where players can do as they please, one of the key factors of the game is its body of players. Many players have come into the game from Schubel & Son's ***Tribes of Crane***, and a more competitive and cunning collection of players would be hard to find. The game is already filled with alliances mapping the universe, staging "friendly" combat to learn the basics of battle, and even baiting an Imperial starkiller to see if the GM-enforced ban on combat in the Imperia system means pursuit out of the system. At least one group has its own computer

file of game data. With incredible duplicity, there are even alliances within alliances which are not at all what they seem.

My alliance brothers prevent me from revealing more. But perhaps I can quote others:

"*Do not,* under *any* circumstances, show up at my colonies!" wrote one player I had agreed to help. "I am currently having pirate trouble (they destroyed both colonies) and it could be dangerous! I am (possibly) going to relocate to another system, farther out . . ."

"I hear you were involved in the Rex raid," wrote another. "If this is true your ship is dead meat. My allies are not, repeat, not pleased! From ship number 848, cruiser *Rebel Lord.*" What, me involved in the Rex raid? 'Course not . . .

If there is a problem with ***Star Venture***, it has to do with the extreme competitiveness of its players. They trust *no one*. It can be very, very difficult to get into one of the established alliances. I managed to enter one only because another player championed me, checkmating his allies' attempts to bamboozle me. There is also the option of starting a fresh alliance, always fun but somewhat risky.

What if you can't get into *any* alliance? One of the odd things about this game is that if you are not in an alliance, you have no idea of what's going on. Someone might have captured Imperia itself, for all you know, while you plod about the galaxy looking for something to do. Given the scale of the game, there are not a lot of things a single ship or two can do by themselves.

The turn system is similar to that used in Schubel & Son's ***Catacombs of Chaos,*** with one important improvement. Actions are filed on bubble cards, one per card. Unlike ***Catacombs,*** however, any number of actions can be filed for a ship in a turn (a limit of 15 per ship per turn is recommended). Actions are given numbers in the order you want them performed. This system works very well, though postage for the cards may well exceed the usual 20¢ stamp.

There are no deadlines, but if you spend four months without doing anything the Gamemaster will ask you if you're still in the game. This can be very nice – it allows you, for instance, to explore the galaxy with your destroyer while leaving your medium freighter safe (and not using any turns) at Imperia.

The print-outs are impressive in size, often three feet or more in length per ship. A typical print-out might consist of a scan report or two, market prices at a colony and ground party and colony status reports.

Star Venture is a fascinating game. I recommend it, with a few warnings: (1) This is not a game for novices, and (2) it requires some mathematical ability and a blazing competitive will. I also commend Schubel & Son for their lightning speed in publishing errata and in implementing player suggestions (already adding convoy and special message rules). The price is very fair.

Star Venture marks one more step in Schubel & Son's drive to supremacy in the grand diplomacy field. ***Galactic Conflict*** and ***Starlord*** mark Flying Buffalo's resurgence, picking up "outside" designs and aiming at the novice player. Both companies have new games waiting in the wings – Schubel & Son with six new in-house designs for 1983, Flying Buffalo with its newly-acquired ***Feudal Lords*** (formerly from Grand Simulations) and a mysterious elaborate in-house design still months from starting.

But what about the other companies? What about ***Mobius I***? What of Entertainment Concepts with their striking ***Silverdawn*** and ***Star Trek – The Correspondence Game***? Watch this magazine for further details . . .

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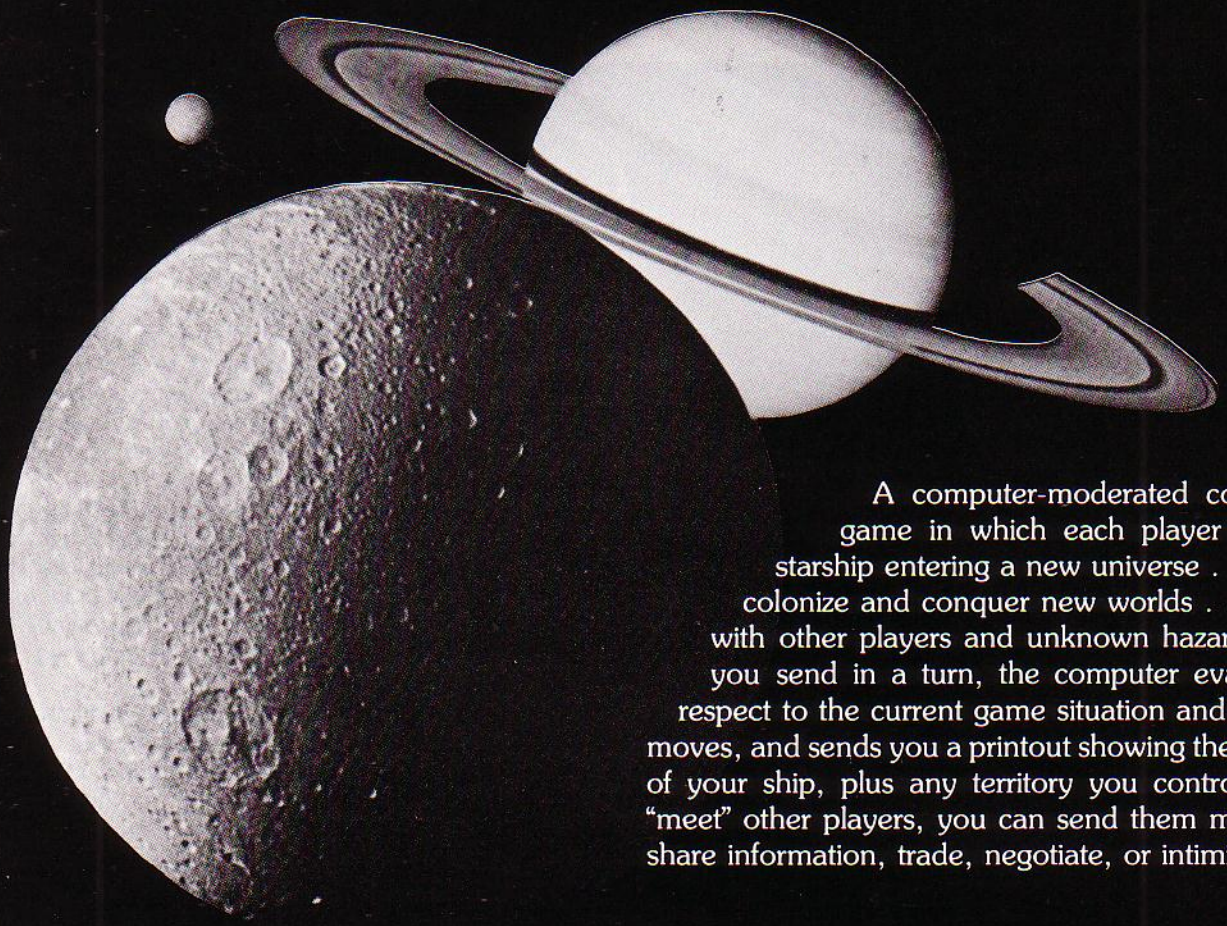

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Take That! And That!

Damage Variant for TOP SECRET

by W.G. Armintrout

The worst problem with ***Top Secret*** is all those agents killed by a single shot to the foot.

If you've played the game, you know what I'm talking about:

"You hit him," says the Administrator. "Location roll?"

"Left foot."

"Damage rolls?"

"Internal damage. Serious. Twelve injury points."

"Plusses?"

"Plus three for 9mm dum-dum ammo, none for body location. That's fifteen total injury points."

And, since the average enemy agent has only 10 Life Level points, the Administrator crinkles up the stat sheet and tosses it away . . .

Dead. From a wound in the foot.

What makes the matter worse is that there is a table in the back of the rulebook which looks like it could help. It's called the Temporary Losses Chart, back in the optional rules; it lists body locations across the top and types of wounds down the side, so that the two can be cross-checked to determine the effects of the wound. Nice idea, no?

Unfortunately, the rules that go with the chart are all screwed up; they don't even explain how to use the thing – as a replacement for the main game rules, as the prologue implies: (Nope. You can't kill anyone with the temporary loss rules.) Are the percentages taken off current or original attribute strengths? (Neither is a good answer . . . using percentages was a bad idea to start with, since it equalizes all characters, no matter their level.)

After long study, I *think* the Temporary Loss rules are merely a way to add a little more bloodiness to the game. (When average enemy agents have 10 life level points and average player characters have 13, do we need more bloodiness?) Not only that, but the system is difficult, unplayable, and useless.

But it *is* a step in the right direction. If *I* were talked into designing a better damage system for ***Top Secret*** (don't ask me to . . . I have better things to do) I'd start with the same sort of table: locations along one side, types of wounds along the other.

I'd add the die roll numbers along with the locations and wound types, right on the main table. That would condense the three tables used now down into one. (You have to alter "right arm/hand" to "weapon arm/hand", but that's no big deal.)

I'd scrap the percentages business, naturally. Instead of deducting things from the main attributes, which takes too much bookkeeping, I'd just list the life level loss that each combination of wound and location causes.

The Losses rules had a good idea when they had wounds downgrading speed and accuracy, though I'd simplify them quite a bit. Instead of deducting percentages from Coordination and then recomputing Offense and a half-dozen other derived secondary and tertiary attributes, I would merely class a few wounds as "-10," "-20," or "-30" to accuracy scores. It's the same idea, but taken into a form that can be played by normal people.

When it came to figuring injury points for each type of wound, of course, I would be careful to make the new damage rules work out to be as bloody as the original rules. That way players could freely alternate from the original rules to my advanced rules and back, without being thrown off by having them work differently. The optional Pistol, Rifle And Submachine Gun Ammunition Injury Modifiers table would work with both systems, although the optional body location modifiers would obviously not be needed with my hypothetical system.

And if I were going to write up such an Advanced Damage Chart – since I've gone this far, I might as well do it – it would look something like this:

TOP SECRET is a trademark of TSR Hobbies Inc.

ADVANCED DAMAGE CHART

To use this table, roll percentile dice for Wound Location and then for Wound Type. If the Wound Type roll is even, the wound is serious (S); if the roll is odd, it's a light wound (L). Cross-reference the two rolls on the chart. The resulting number is the damage taken by the character (plus or minus normal modifiers). If there is a raised number beside the damage total, the wounded character subsequently has an accuracy penalty equal to ten times the raised number until the wound is healed.

Example: Scott Birch is shot with a .357 Magnum. The first percentile roll is 15 (weapon arm) and the second roll is 82 (fracture), and the 82 was even, indicating a serious wound. Scott takes 9 points of damage (7 for the wound plus 2 for a Magnum) and suffers a -20 accuracy penalty.

Location:	*Type of Wound* 01-20 Abrasion		21-40 Incision		41-60 Laceration		61-80 Puncture		81-90 Fracture		91-100 Internal Damage	
	*L**	*S**	*L*	*S*	*L*	*S*	*L*	*S*	*L*	*S*	*L*	*S*
01-09 Head/Neck	1	2	2	4	4	7	8	11^1	11^1	11^2	12^3	12^4
10-16 Weapon Arm	1	2	3	4	5	6	6	6^1	7	7^2	8^1	8^2
17-18 Weapon Hand	1	2	2	3	3	3^1	3	4^2	4^1	4^3	4^2	4^3
19-25 Other Arm	1	2	3	4	5	6	6	6	7	7	8	8^1
26-27 Other Hand	1	2	2	3	3	3	3	4^1	4	4^1	4	4^2
28-46 Chest	1	4	5	5	7	8	9	10	11	11	12	12
47-64 Abdomen	1	2	4	7	8	8	9	10	11	11	12	12
65-79 Right Leg	1	2	3	3	5	6	6	7	7	8	9	10^1
80-82 Right Foot	1	2	2	3	3	4	4	4	5	5^1	5	5^2
83-97 Left Leg	1	2	3	3	5	6	6	7	7	8	9	10^1
98-100 Left Foot	1	2	2	3	3	4	4	4	5	5^1	5	5^2

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METAL

by John Rankin

Castle Perilous

The TSR convention display is a huge gray castle, with eight-foot walls decorated with animated gargoyles. At the HIA trade show in Anaheim earlier this year, many were comparing it with the siege mentality that had grown up between TSR and the rest of the adventure gaming industry. (Mayfair Games even had a small catapult set up facing the castle walls.)

On the last day of the show, I was summoned to Dragon Castle by a member of the resident royalty, Kevin Blume. Kevin, his brother Brian, and Gary Gygax run TSR. Kevin had just read the February *Metal.* He wanted to talk. Uh huh, sure. However, the bearer of this message was none other than FBI's trusty Mike Stackpole. He assured me that I wouldn't be set upon by orcs and that there were no trap doors in the private offices atop the castle's towers. So I went.

I can't really say I was surprised at the man I met. Those who know Kevin speak well of him. He describes himself as a "cold fish" in the business sense, and yet he's as pleasant a fellow as you could ever hope to meet – charming, in fact, in a reserved sort of way. I was impressed with his willingness to address most any subject that came up, and also by his apparent desire to improve communications with the rest of the industry. Needless to say, I was delighted when he agreed to do an interview. But I also worried just a little whether it would actually come off. Top-level executives are very busy people.

Kevin, however, was as good as his word. Despite short warning of our deadline, and a schedule that had him about to leave on his first real vacation in years, he graciously came through.

My sincere thanks to go Kevin for his time and to his administrative assistant, Tish Lux, who helped set things up. And now . . .

Straight from the Dragon's Mouth

TSG: When we spoke at HIA, you took issue with some points I had made in the February issue of *The Space Gamer.* Would you like to address that subject here?

KB: The first paragraph makes reference to Duke [Seifried] and myself being in Dallas, which is correct. We did not go down to Dallas to talk to Heritage about acquiring assets; that expectation was solely on Heritage's side. We went down to present our toy line to a customer and we went down because Duke was attending the meeting of the [Heritage] creditors, but we had no intention of stopping in at Heritage. We did not.

"We did not go down to Dallas to talk to Heritage about acquiring assets; that expectation was solely on Heritage's side."

TSG: Are there other points you want to address on that column?

KB: Okay, the Grenadier situation. "TSR reportedly attempted to gain control of Grenadier in return for nothing more than the right to continue producing licensed figures. A very small cash payment was later thrown in." That is not true. The offer that TSR made to Grenadier was that the two of us would jointly form a third company in which Grenadier would place all of its assets and liabilities and TSR would place four times Grenadier's net worth, *in cash,* so that TSR would own 80% and Grenadier 20%. And I don't think four times Grenadier's net worth is a very small cash payment.

TSG: No, that payment was in reference to a figure I was told was actually offered to the principal partners in Grenadier.

KB: No money was offered to principal partners. A venture was being formed that would have been a merger-type arrangement. Okay – now the situation from my perspective as to why it didn't happen was that I waited for an interminable amount of time for a set of financials from Grenadier that never arrived. And, of course, we had to make a decision to go forward in another direction.

TSG: Okay, let me toss a question in there. Grenadier obviously had everything you needed in the way of a miniatures line, considering that they had been doing the licensed line for quite some time. At the HIA show I had a chance to look at the first figures in TSR's home-grown line. Some of the figures were quite impressive; on the other hand, some of them weren't. Why does TSR think they will be able to acquire a sizeable section of the market?

KB: What you saw at the show were prototypes which were quite hurried, which is why the spottiness of quality. We have four sculptors at present, all of whom are very good to outstanding in their own area. Now, some of the ones you saw, besides being rushed, were by sculptors working in an area which was not their expertise – working on a human when they were expert in monsters, or vice versa. And, in addition to the time they were working on these sculptures, they were also doing 64 sculptures for our toy line.

TSG: Did your miniatures sculptors also do the large-scale figures?

KB: Yes.

TSG: We had better throw something in here, because our readers may not be familiar with what we are talking about. Could you run down what your large-scale figures are? What market they are intended for?

KB: TSR Hobbies has chosen to directly enter the toy marketplace. We licensed part of our ***AD&D*** toy line to LJN, a large company in our field. They created the 3¾"-scale articulated figures. So we licensed them to do the protagonists and antagonists – the player-characters, so to speak – and their mounts and certain large monsters. We retained for ourselves anything else that might come from ***Dungeons & Dragons.*** In doing so, we presented at this year's toy show 48 packages, which are made up of, I believe, 64 – it might be even more than that – pieces. These are 3¾"-scale, what we call adventure figures. The majority of them are solid PVC castings – highly detailed,

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highly painted, in action poses. Some of them, in addition, are bendables. All of these are 3¾"-scale.

TSG: That brings up a point. Is it true that the demographics of ***D&D*** players is by and large getting younger as time goes by?

KB: The demographics are moving younger, yes. Well, they're broadening into the younger area. To the best of our ability to track, we are not losing any significant number of older players. In fact, we appear to be gaining in that area also. We are gaining faster in the younger area because we had no players there to begin with. Our major age grouping seems to be from eight to 22.

TSG: Kevin, how many people do you estimate are playing ***D&D*** in the English-speaking world on a regular basis?

KB: That is a number that we don't have an exact handle on. Let me think a second. There's got to be three or four million who are reasonably regular players. One thing which was very startling was that the English product has made a greater penetration than we had expected in the non-English-speaking world.

TSG: We've seen your ads seeking Japanese-speaking translators and designers. Do you see Japan as being a large up-and-coming market?

KB: Yes, I do.

TSG: Let me backtrack a moment. There are a number of miniatures companies in the marketplace today that have exceptionally fine lines, the quality being good to excellent throughout, very well-established companies. What will give TSR an edge, besides the fact that these are the official ***D&D*** figures?

KB: Well, besides the obvious edge of the name – at least people will look at us – we have the edge of having the dominant market share, which is always significant. We have the financial resources to back this with the best available equipment and the best available sculptors. And we have the ability to give them, the sculptors, the backing so they can do their best possible work.

TSG: I've addressed this problem before in *Metal*. There seems to be a very real perception, at least among the people who run the miniatures companies, that they're dealing with a much more finite market than perhaps is prevalent in role-playing or boardgames. Do you see the market as being large enough to support not only a major effort by TSR, but several other companies at the same time?

KB: If they attempt to go head-on with us, I think they are making a poor business decision. TSR Hobbies has no desire to dominate 100% of the marketplace. That is not a good business decision, or economically feasible. There will always be a significant group of people whose interests do not, together, create a large enough market to make it profitable for TSR. We are a large company, we have large overhead. We cannot get into something which is of the small or short-run nature. If our competitors choose those areas in which to operate, they're going to make a good living, because they can operate on a smaller level because they have smaller overheads.

TSG: Can I take this to mean that TSR is primarily interested in the 25mm fantasy market and sees the other types of figures as a secondary market or a market not worthy of TSR's attention at all?

KB: Well, I think in both the science fiction and the fantasy areas we're obviously going to have a presence. Those are the areas that we wish to sell to the mass market; those are the areas that we can generate the volumes that make it a profitable operation for us. Other than that, in this point in time we are not looking elsewhere.

"... TSR will join no organization that causes TSR to lose money."

TSG: Let's move to something different. I understand that TSR has opened informal negotiations with the leadership of GAMA, the Game Manufacturer's Association, and that if an agreement can be reached this would result in TSR joining GAMA. Has there been any movement in this area; what's the prognosis at this point?

KB: Well, at the show I talked with Howard [Barasch] and informed him that the board of directors agreed in principal as to what would have to happen before TSR re-joined the GAMA organization. And those were basically based on the philosophy that TSR will join no organization that causes TSR to lose money. We are a business. Our business is to make a profit. Now, let me break that into two specific areas. First one is that TSR Hobbies, being the owner of the mark and the operator of the convention *Gen Con*, does not find it desirable to lose money on that operation. We basically shoot for a break-even operation for the benefit of the gamers, and hope we make that back on promotion and publicity. However, an official GAMA event called Origins is going to run in our backyard, we are going to lose massive sums of money. So we're not going to join an organization that sponsors an event that causes us to lose money.

TSG: Should I take that to mean that Mr. Gygax's call for a boycott of Origins '83 is going to stay in effect regardless of negotiations between TSR and GAMA?

KB: That I can't comment on. I'm not really aware what you mean by a call for a boycott.

TSG: A boycott was called for in issue 65 of the *Dragon*, the issue that came out during *Gen Con* last year. [September 1982 issue, pages 4-6 – AA.] He urged gamers to boycott Origins.

KB: Well, we would obviously prefer they come to *Gen Con*. What we are asking is not that GAMA cease to sponsor Origins. What we are asking is that, in our opinion, GAMA make a very intelligent decision to, as the HIA does, sponsor numerous regional conventions and move the national convention from regional to regional sites across the years. In other words, there would be a GAMA-sponsored convention on the East Coast, one in the midwest, one on the west coast, and one in the south. And that these stay fixed and run every year, regionally, with any support that GAMA could provide – obviously, official sponsorship. And the national site would rotate among them. So Origins would stay in the East, *Gen Con* would stay in the central, and an organization in the south and west.

TSG: I have one other subject I'd like to cover. You can take this as lightly as you'd like to. Rumors about TSR are rampant in the industry; it's very seldom that a month goes by that we don't hear something, perhaps quite believable, perhaps a totally incredible rumor about what's happening within TSR. To give you an example, the most recent thing we heard was that Duke Seifried and Gary Gygax were leaving TSR to form the World of Greyhawk, Inc., that you and Brian were selling the remaining assets to Mattel. There were three or four versions of this story floating around the HIA show. Now, I understand that jealousy at time is going to start rumors. And I understand that in any company, no matter what size, there are going to be differences within the management, and I can understand how these things would be blown out of proportion entirely. But how do stories this incredible get started, Kevin?

KB: To be honest, I have no idea. Brian and Gary and I run this company

as a triad, and obviously we don't have 100% unanimity. But to date we have always been able to find an agreeable position among the three of us. We have never had the types of problems one would normally associate with a triad. We counterbalance each other amazingly well. We find it an extremely positive method for us to operate this company.

TSG: Kevin, are you sure you guys don't just get together for a drink after work occasionally and think one of these things up to entertain the rest of us?

KB: No. To be honest, I have no idea where these things come from. I can understand the part about selling out to Mattel. I mean Mattel would desperately love to buy us.

TSG: Have they expressed this interest?

KB: I really can't comment on that.

TSG: We were talking about the convention; several of the companies I've talked to, who don't wish to have their names made public just yet, are apparently not going to attend *Gen Con* because of the specific policy of *Gen Con* retaining the right to screen and approve or disapprove of products displayed there. I spoke to Duke last year at *Gen Con*; he intimated at that time that TSR was interested in seeing the adventure gaming industry adopt a code similar to the comic book code; is this indeed a plan that TSR is going to push?

KB: I think a mature industry needs a code of conduct and a code of ethics. We are not going to attempt to force the industry to do anything. We, ourselves, have adopted a code of ethics and conduct similar to what is used in the comic book industry; if other people would like to follow our lead, that would make us very happy. Unfortunately, there is the very minor portion of our industry that chooses to produce materials that I personally find offensive and would not like to present to the public. I think it tarnishes all our images. People can holler censorship if they want, but that type of material will not be allowed at *Gen Con*, and the types of products that promote sex, nudity and violence and so forth are simply not appropriate for this audience. What adults choose to do in their own time is their own business; I'm not going to interfere. But now our marketplace is composed of an awful lot of younger people.

TSG: When will we see a copy of the code of ethics that TSR has adopted?

KB: To be honest, I don't know under what circumstances we would show that. Again, that's our own internal code and we wouldn't want to impose that upon other people. I suppose if TSR were to join GAMA, if they had an interest in seeing it as an official body of the industry, we would be more than happy to let them see it.

TSG: I have to bring up the point that it would be awfully hard for the other companies in the industry to voluntarily adopt this if they don't know what it says.

KB: Again, we are constantly accused of attempting to dominate this industry and make it run our way. I don't want to do something, however good the intentions, that will promote the image that we have picked up, I believe for reasons that don't totally follow what our desires are.

TSG: What would you like to tell the readers of *The Space Gamer*?

KB: First of all, I would like to pass along my appreciation to them for supporting our industry and our hobby; and that we at TSR are business people attempting to provide them with a product that they enjoy, and that we hope and encourage other companies to provide them with other products that fulfill their needs that TSR is not capable of doing.

Next Month: This interview was so rewarding that I think we'll just have to do it again. Tune in and meet Andy Chernak, president of Grenadier Models.

1982 Game Survey Results

On the next four pages are the results to our 1982 Game Survey – the responses and reactions of *Space Gamer's* readership to releases in the gaming field.

As we've mentioned before, the project this year was plagued with problems – most notably, the loss of the time of one of our major compilers at both ends of the project (that is, during assembly of the survey and then also during compiling of the results). The results were some confusion and some unfortunate omissions. Next year (now that I have Assistant Editors and such) should be calmer and a bit more thorough.

In most of the responses below, a game title is listed with the initials of the company that put it out. The game item is then rated on a scale of 1-9 – the higher, the better – and the last figure, the number in parentheses, is the percentage of survey respondents who had never heard of the item.

Publishers

Achaeron Games System (AGS) . . . 3.33 (64)
Acorn Software (ACO) 5.44 (40)
Activision (ACT) 6.63 (04)
Advanced Operating Systems (AOS) . 4.00 (64)
Adventure Games (ADG) 4.89 (32)
Adventure International (ADV) 5.48 (45)
Adventures By Mail (ABM) 6.01 (36)
American Wargaming Assoc. (AWA) . 4.87 (36)
Archive (ARC) 5.26 (28)
Atari (ATA) 5.98 (02)
Automated Simulations, Inc. (ASI) 6.20 (26)
Avalon Hill (AVH) 7.05 (01)
Avar Products (AVA) 5.67 (64)
Baron Publishing (BAR) 5.07 (41)
Berkeley Game Co (BGC) 6.45 (48)
Big City (BIC) 2.93 (54)
Big Five Software (BFS) 6.38 (40)
Bolt Publications (BOP) 4.19 (65)
California Pacific Computer Co. (CPC) 5.35 (54)
Capps & Capps (CAP) 2.91 (57)
Castle Creations (CAC) 4.74 (34)
CE Software (CES) 5.40 (49)
Chaosium (CHS) 7.43 (03)
Central Texas Computing (CTX) 4.10 (33)
Cheshire Games (CHE) 3.50 (61)
Citadel Miniatures (CIT) 6.76 (10)
Clemens & Associates (C&A) 4.02 (30)
Close Simulations (CLS) 5.75 (59)
Companions (COM) 5.04 (47)
Computer Gaming World (CGW) 6.00 (46)
Conflict Interaction Associates (CIA) 3.89 (58)
Conflict Simulations Australia (CSA) 4.78 (61)
Creative Computing Software (CCS) 5.38 (27)
Creative Games Workshop (CWW) 5.88 (51)
C-T Simulations (CTS) 1.97 (51)
Daystar West Media Productions (DWM) 3.50 (65)
Dragon Tree (DGT) 4.03 (37)
Dwarfstar Games (DWF) 7.00 (10)
EAV Software (EAV) 3.14 (62)
Edu-Ware Services (EDU) 5.50 (26)
Empire Games (EMG) 3.75 (41)
Emprise Game Systems (EGS) 1.96 (56)
Entertainment Concepts, Inc. (ECI) 3.44 (42)
EON Products (EON) 7.05 (12)
EPYX (EPX) 6.62 (16)
Fantasimulations Assoc. (FSA) 4.10 (58)
Fantastic Simulations (FSM) 4.69 (50)
Fantasy Games Unlimited (FGU) . . 6.05 (10)
FASA (FAS) 6.90 (08)
Flying Buffalo, Inc. (FBI) 5.56 (02)
Game Designer's Workshop (GDW) 7.19 (04)
Gamelords LTD (GLL) 5.36 (24)
Game Merchant (GMR) 4.95 (37)
Games of Fashan (GOF) 3.30 (53)
Games Systems, Inc. (GSI) 3.80 (56)
Games Workshop LTD (GWL) 6.29 (33)
Gamescience (GSC) 5.36 (10)
Graaf Simulations (GRF) 2.31 (57)
Grenadier (GRE) 5.63 (07)
Grimoire Games (GRI) 4.31 (22)
Harry's House (HAH) 3.80 (62)
Hayden Software (HAY) 4.55 (45)
Heritage U.S.A. (HTG) 6.03 (50)
Hero Games (HER) 7.15 (22)
Hexchess (HEX) 5.69 (31)
IBM (IBM) 6.14 (10)
Image Game Co. (IGC) 6.10 (56)
Imagic (IMA) 6.58 (14)
Infinity Limited (INF) 4.17 (56)
Iron Crown Enterprises (ICE) 6.25 (17)
Judges Guild (JUG) 4.42 (02)
The Legionnaire (LEG) 5.05 (39)
Letters (LTR) 6.40 (65)
Level-10 (LEV) 4.71 (56)
LF Enterprises (LFE) 4.20 (65)
Marischal Adventures (MSA) 5.67 (31)
Martian Metals (MMT) 6.59 (06)
Mayfair (MAY) 5.09 (13)
MED Systems Software (MED) 6.31 (55)
Metagaming (MET) 5.57 (02)
Microcomputer Games (MCG) 5.10 (51)
Microlab (MIC) 4.29 (61)
Midkemia Press (MID) 6.22 (33)
Minifigs (MIN) 5.16 (24)
Mobius Games (MOB) 3.51 (33)
Muse Software (MUS) 6.33 (27)
Mysterious Mouse (MMS) 3.33 (65)
Mystic Swamp (MYS) 5.71 (63)
North Pole Productions (NPP) 4.11 (66)
Nova Game Designs (NGD) 6.77 (25)
Oracle Press (ORP) 4.95 (41)
Orisek Industries (ORS) 5.08 (48)
Palladium Books (PAL) 5.66 (26)
Phoenix Software, Inc. (PSI) 4.00 (40)
Prince August (PRA) 6.24 (57)
Rafm Miniatures (RAF) 6.69 (46)
Ragnarok Enterprises (RAE) 5.58 (29)
Ral Partha Enterprises (RAL) 7.33 (04)
Reilly Associates (REA) 3.00 (57)
Reston Publishing Co. (RES) 5.27 (48)
RPG, Inc. (RPG) 5.45 (46)
Saxon (SAX) 5.87 (45)
Schubel & Son (SCH) 4.70 (05)
Simulations Canada (SCN) 5.63 (36)
Sir-Tech (SIR) 6.66 (37)
Sirius Software (SIS) 5.76 (35)
Skytrex (SKY) 6.44 (59)
Steve Jackson Games (SJG) 7.65 (01)
Strategic Simulations, Inc. (SSI) . . . 6.60 (21)
Superior Models, Inc. (SUP) 7.15 (25)
Superior Simulations (SUS) 4.20 (49)
Task Force Games (TFG) 6.56 (04)
Terra Games Company (TGC) 4.00 (58)
Threshold Games (THR) 5.00 (59)
Tiger Publications (TIG) 7.10 (61)
Timeline (TML) 6.41 (43)
TSR Hobbies, Inc. (TSR) 4.49 (01)
West End Games (WEG) 5.39 (39)
Westwind Simulations (WWS) 4.25 (59)
Wilmark Dynasty (WID) 3.22 (59)
Wind Warrior Co. (WWC) 4.43 (62)
Yaquinto Publications (YAQ) 6.01 (04)
Zocchi Distributors (ZOC) 5.25 (14)
Zorph Enterprises (ZPH) 2.40 (51)

Magazines and Publications

Adventure Gaming (MZK) 5.73 (16)
Breakout (CSA) 5.14 (63)
Computer Gaming World (CGW) . . . 6.00 (41)
Different Worlds (CHS) 6.37 (08)
Dragon (TSR) 5.36 (01)
Far Traveller (FAS) 6.34 (28)
Flying Buffalo Quarterly (FBI) 4.19 (16)
For Your Eyes Only (TIG) 5.14 (35)
Game Merchant (GMR) 4.69 (34)
High Passage (FAS) 6.16 (19)
Interplay (MET) 4.54 (24)
Journal of the Traveller's Aid Society (GDW) 7.32 (04)
Nexus (TFG) 5.87 (14)
Pegasus (JUG) 3.59 (21)
Sorcerer's Apprentice (FBI) 5.41 (12)
The Space Gamer (SJG) 8.07 (00)
White Dwarf (GWL) 6.18 (06)

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SF Miniatures Games 4.79 (02)
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SF Tactical Games

Asteroid Pirates (YAQ) 4.89 (26)

Berserker (FBI) 5.15 (12)
Boarding Party (TFG) 6.00 (30)
Escape from Altassar (TFG) 4.63 (43)
G.E.V. (SJG) 7.56 (06)
Grav Armor (DWF) 7.32 (09)
Grav Ball (FAS) 6.30 (11)
Helltank (MET) 5.36 (12)
Helltank Destroyer (MET) 5.45 (17)
Highway 2000 (THR) 4.79 (42)
Moon Base Clavius (TFG) 5.27 (23)
Ogre (SJG) 7.60 (06)
Rescue from the Hive (SPI) 5.38 (24)
Space Empires (MAY) 6.88 (35)
Star Smuggler (DWF) 6.84 (26)
Supervillains (TFG) 3.40 (25)

SF Strategic Games

Federation Space (TFG) 5.60 (14)
Freedom in the Galaxy (AVH) 6.03 (14)
Starfire III – Empires (TFG) 6.19 (25)

SF Board Games

Borderlands (EON) 7.14 (15)
Invasion Earth (GDW) 6.19 (16)
Star Explorer (FGU) 6.00 (34)
Trailblazer (MET) 5.52 (27)

SF Game Supplements

Battle Damage Code Red (TFG) . . . 6.00 (25)
Borderlands Expansion Set 1 (EON) . 6.13 (21)
Car Wars Expansion Set 1 (SJG) . . . 6.66 (08)
Cosmic Encounter Exp. Set 8 (EON) 6.16 (03)
Star Fleet Battles Exp. Set 2 (TFG) . 6.57 (08)
Star Fleet Battles Exp. Set 3 (TFG) . 6.38 (07)

SF Role-Playing Games

Champions (Revised) (HER) 7.19 (11)
Phase VII (CHE) 5.09 (43)
Star Frontiers (TSR) 4.88 (16)
The Traveller Book (GDW) 7.10 (06)
Villains & Vigilantes
(Revised) (FGU) 5.75 (07)
Worlds of Wonder (CHS) 6.38 (19)

SF Role-Playing Supplements

Adventure Class Ships 1 (FAS) 6.44 (20)
Adventure Class Ships 2 (FAS) 6.92 (22)
Aslan Mercenary Ships (FAS) 6.45 (18)
Breakout (HER) 7.00 (47)
Broadsword (GDW) 6.60 (22)
Chamax Plague/Horde (GDW) 7.12 (30)
Death Duel with the Destroyers
(FGU) 6.04 (30)
Divine Intervention/Night of Conquest
(GDW) 7.18 (30)
Enemies II (HER) 6.94 (39)
Fasolt in Peril (FGU) 6.86 (49)
Fate of the Sky Raiders (FAS) 6.71 (35)
FCI Consumer Guide (FAS) 6.62 (38)
F.O.R.C.E. (FGU) 6.46 (48)
Gamma World Referee's Screen
and Mini-Module (TSR) 4.82 (21)
Homeworld (PAL) 5.71 (38)
Hotel Complex (FAS) 7.35 (40)
Incedus III (FGU) 5.11 (51)
Island of Doctor Apocalypse (FGU) . 5.68 (29)
The Journey (PAL) 6.55 (41)
Library Data N-Z (GDW) 6.88 (25)
Maranatha-Alkahest Sector (JUG) . . 5.00 (46)
Master of the Mind (JUG) 5.00 (49)
Merchant Class Ships (FAS) 6.69 (22)
Operation Morpheus (FGU) 6.25 (45)
Personal Base Loads (TML) 6.86 (47)
Prison Planet (GDW) 7.00 (24)
Rescue on Galatea (FAS) 6.78 (37)
Restormel (JUG) 3.11 (47)
Rowsian II (FGU) 5.00 (53)
Seldon's Compendium of Starcraft
(FGU) 7.41 (40)
Shadow of Yog-Sothoth (CHS) 7.20 (34)
Simba Safari (JUG) 6.50 (39)
Solomani Rim (GDW) 7.14 (21)
Star Sector Atlas II (FGU) 6.60 (33)
Sunday Drivers (SJG) 7.40 (09)
Tarlkins Landing (JUG) 6.25 (39)
Top Secret Administrator's Screen and
Mini-Module (TSR) 4.96 (18)
Trail of the Sky Raiders (FAS) 6.86 (27)
Vault of the Ni'er Queyon (FGU) . . 6.75 (44)
Vehicular Base Loads (TML) 6.53 (46)

SF Miniatures

Striker (GDW) 7.73 (14)

SF Computer Games

Alien Garden (EPX) 5.25 (55)
Andromeda Conquest (MCG) 5.42 (48)
Cosmic Balance (SSI) 5.86 (32)
Cytron Masters (SSI) 6.39 (27)
Galactic Gladiators (SSI) 6.42 (25)
Galaxy (MCG) 5.44 (44)
G.F.S. Sorcerers (MCG) 5.00 (48)
Klondike 2000 (HAY) 3.20 (54)
Moon Patrol (MCG) 6.67 (44)
Rendezvous (EDU) 5.71 (40)
S.E.U.I.S. (SSI) 6.13 (32)
Star Traders (HAY) 4.50 (41)
Voyager I (MCG) 5.64 (43)

Fantasy Tactical Games

Dragon Hunt (AVH) 6.25 (40)
Dragon Rage (DWF) 6.81 (37)
Goblin (DWF) 6.08 (29)

Fantasy Board Games

Sanctuary (MAY) 5.86 (34)
Titan (AVH) 6.79 (26)

Fantasy Role-Playing Games

The Book of Mars (IGC) 6.53 (43)
Bushido (FGU) 6.02 (16)
Man, Myth & Magic (YAQ) 5.44 (09)
Rolemaster Series (ICE) 6.92 (27)
RuneQuest (CHS) 7.04 (09)
Swordbearer (HTG) 5.57 (33)
Ysgarth Rule System (RAE) 5.17 (36)

Fantasy Role-Playing Supplements

Amazon Mutual Wants You Vol. 1
(DGT) 4.36 (40)
Angmar – Land of the Witch-King
(ICE) 6.71 (42)
Arms Law/Claw Law
Boxed Set (ICE) 6.40 (15)
Ascent to Hell (YAQ) 4.00 (56)
Beastmaker Mountain (MAY) 5.09 (39)
Book of Artifacts (DGT) 3.75 (43)
Book of Treasure Maps III (JUG) . . 4.50 (37)
Borderlands (CHS) 7.49 (16)
Caves and Caverns (JUG) 3.00 (43)
Character Law (ICE) 5.86 (18)
CityBook I (FBI) 6.46 (14)
City State Warfare (JUG) 4.33 (34)
Claw Law (ICE) 6.60 (15)
Corsairs of Tallibar (JUG) 4.50 (48)
Curse on Hareth (COM) 4.80 (44)
Dark Assassin (FAS) 7.55 (49)
Death to Setanta (YAQ) 5.88 (53)
Demons of Dundurn (JUG) 5.00 (54)
Druids of Doom (JUG) 6.75 (53)
Dwarves (MAY) 6.67 (30)
The Egyptian Trilogy (YAQ) 5.20 (53)
Fantastic Personalities (JUG) 4.20 (47)
F'deck Fo's Tomb (JUG) 4.50 (47)
Fez I (MAY) 6.00 (45)
Game Masters of Kasar (FBI) 5.50 (51)
The Glastonbury Labyrinth (YAQ) . 6.00 (57)
Glory Hole Dwarven Mine (JUG) . . . 3.46 (42)
Heroic Expeditions (JUG) 4.71 (49)
The Illhiedrin Book (JUG) 4.13 (51)
Imperial Infantry Squad (JUG) 4.13 (47)
Kingdom of the Sidhe (YAQ) 5.67 (49)
Middle Earth Guidebook (ICE) 6.46 (22)
Mistywood (FBI) 6.18 (41)
Nanorien Stones (MAY) 4.80 (39)
Newgrange Reactivated (YAQ) 5.00 (57)
Pirates of Hagrost (JUG) 5.40 (55)
Prey of Darkness (JUG) 5.00 (56)
Questworld (CHS) 7.36 (34)
Rat on a Stick (JUG) 3.67 (55)
Scorpion Hall (CHS) 6.77 (43)
Shield Maidens of Sea Rune (JUG) . . 6.50 (53)
The Snow King's Bride (CHS) 7.00 (50)
Soloquest (CHS) 6.39 (32)
The Spirit Stones (FAS) 6.92 (47)
Starsilver Trek (JUG) 4.75 (51)
Tome of Mighty Magic (NPP) 4.00 (49)
Traps Too (FBI) 6.33 (30)
Treasure (FAS) 7.75 (51)
Trollpack (CHS) 7.33 (19)
Umbar – Haven of the Corsairs (ICE) 7.39 (41)
Valley of the Mists (FGU) 6.23 (39)
Witches Court Marshes (JUG) 4.50 (56)
Wondrous Relics (JUG) 3.20 (57)
Wondrous Weapons (JUG) 4.67 (53)
Wraith Overlord (JUG) 3.67 (49)

Fantasy Miniatures Games

By the Sword! (LEG) 5.64 (31)

Fantasy Computer Games

Curse of Ra (EPX) 5.00 (40)
Crypt of the Undead (EPX) 4.33 (40)
Danger in Drindisti (EPX) 4.50 (54)
Dungeon (TSR) 4.33 (33)
Escape from Vulcan's Isle (EPX) . . . 7.60 (52)
King Arthur's Heir (EPX) 6.50 (57)
The Nightmare (EPX) 6.00 (56)
Sword of Fargoal (EPX) 6.00 (57)
Swordthrust 6 – Eternal Curse
(CES) 6.67 (46)
Swordthrust 7 – Hall of Alchemie
(CES) 5.67 (46)
Telengard (MCG) 4.60 (40)
Theseus and the Minotaur (TSR) . . . 3.67 (42)
Wizardry Revision 2 (SIR) 7.67 (39)
Wizardry – Knight of Diamonds
(SIR) 7.73 (39)

Other Role-Playing Games

Alma Mater (ORP) 4.10 (34)
Behind Enemy Lines (FAS) 6.10 (22)
Daredevils (FGU) 6.79 (35)
Gangbusters (TSR) 4.62 (10)
Pirates & Plunder (TFG) 5.89 (15)
Recon (RPG) 5.55 (36)

Other Role-Playing Game Supplements

British Commandos (FAS) 7.21 (45)
Guns of Navarone (FAS) 6.82 (34)

Pre-1982 Role-Playing Games

Advanced D&D (TSR) 5.08 (02)
Adventures in Fantasy (ADG) 4.10 (24)
Aftermath (FGU) 5.62 (09)
Arduin Adventure (GRI) 4.15 (18)
Basic D&D (TSR) 4.06 (03)
Champions (HER) 6.85 (10)
Chivalry & Sorcery (FGU) 5.73 (08)
DragonQuest (SPI) 5.65 (06)

The Fantasy Trip (MET)	6.75 (03)
Gamma World (TSR)	4.39 (05)
High Fantasy (RES)	4.39 (17)
Land of the Rising Sun (FGU)	4.92 (24)
Merc (FGU)	4.92 (21)
Skull & Crossbones (FGU)	5.21 (21)
Space Opera (FGU)	5.84 (11)
Star Rovers Module 1 (ARC)	3.94 (37)
Superhero 2044 (GSC)	4.09 (10)
Thieves' Guild (GLL)	6.26 (08)
Tunnels & Trolls (FBI)	4.90 (05)
Universe (SPI)	5.12 (11)
Villains & Vigilantes (FGU)	4.79 (10)

Play-By-Mail Games

Battle Plan (FBI)	3.81 (37)
Beyond the Stellar Empire (ABM)	5.96 (20)
Catacombs of Chaos (SCH)	3.43 (12)
Earthwood (GSI)	3.47 (21)
Feudal Lords (GRF)	2.91 (32)
Fleet Maneuvers (FSM)	3.03 (34)
Galac-Tac (CAP)	3.14 (34)
Galactic Conflict (FBI)	2.93 (25)
Ganglords (BIC)	2.68 (20)
Heroic Fantasy (FBI)	4.17 (16)
Nuclear Destruction (FBI)	3.84 (26)
Realms of Sword and Thunder (EMG)	3.31 (38)
Silverdawn (ECI)	3.32 (23)
Star Trek (ECI)	3.24 (14)
Star Venture (SCH)	4.39 (20)
StarMaster (SCH)	4.39 (10)
The Tribes of Crane (SCH)	4.22 (06)
Universe II (C&A)	3.78 (11)
Universe III (CTX)	4.00 (11)
Warboid World (ABM)	6.54 (34)

Miscellaneous Games

Civilization (AVH)	7.36 (26)
Encounters (MAY)	5.23 (39)
Gunslinger (AVH)	6.26 (25)
Hexchess (HEX)	6.55 (24)
Illuminati (SJG)	7.50 (09)
Robin Hood (AVH)	6.00 (25)
Shootout at the Salon (NGD)	5.29 (31)

Play Aids

Adventure Board (AVA)	3.82 (42)
Companion Pieces – Fantasy Furnishings (COM)	4.60 (40)
Dungeon Floors (HTG)	6.30 (22)
TFT Character Record Sheets (FSA)	4.24 (23)
World Board (AVA)	2.47 (41)

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Capsule reviews of games	7.87
Featured reviews of games	7.55
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Complete games in some issues	6.45
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New Characters for TFT	5.62 (03)
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Westway	5.76 (02)
The Worm	6.41 (03)
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Massacre at Midville	6.35 (02)
Street Legal	6.56 (02)
Street Legal Gaming Notes	6.18 (03)
Winning Heroic Fantasy	5.11 (03)
Lair of the Fat Man	5.66 (02)
Roleaids Review	5.58 (02)
Grav Armor +3	6.20 (01)
Illuminating the Post Office	6.09 (00)
Battlesuit	6.98 (00)
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Rapidfire Line Review	5.85 (00)
The Return of IGDRIP	5.80 (00)
1982 Game Survey	7.49

Other Topics

On the question of what readers would do if *The Space Gamer* split into one SF and one fantasy magazine, 42% said they would buy both magazines; 32% said they'd buy TSG exclusively; 9% said they'd buy the fantasy magazine exclusively; and 14% said they'd give it up. (Give it a try, guys . . .)

In reaction to *Autoduel Quarterly*, 26% said they'd subscribe; 11% would buy it regularly at the store; 26% would buy it occasionally; and 32% said they'd ignore it entirely.

And the idea of our publishing a house organ similar in format to ADQ was greeted with 19% who said they'd subscribe, 10% who said they'd buy it regularly at the store, 51% who'd buy it occasionally at the store, and 16% who'd treat it with disdain.

Comments (Ours and Yours)

We made a change in the survey-results format this year, for no special reason except to try it out. Last year everything was listed in order of ratings, highest first. This year they are alphabetized instead. Which do you think is easier to use?

As for the results themselves: There were no big surprises. The most popular game was GDW's ***Striker***, which scored an incredible 7.73 (9 being a perfect score). Other high scorers included ***Ogre, G.E.V., Grav Armor,*** Eon's ***Borderlands,*** and ***Illuminati.*** Interestingly, AH's ***Civilization*** scored an excellent 7.36 – and it is neither sf nor fantasy! Revised ***Champions*** and ***The Traveller Book*** also did well.

The highest-rated companies were SJ Games (but keep in mind that our readers are likely to be biased), GDW, Hero, Eon, Avalon Hill, Chaosium, Tiger Publications (publishers of *FYEO*), and two miniatures companies, Superior and Ral Partha.

Among magazines, *Space Gamer* and the *Journal of the Travellers' Aid Society* were the high scorers. That is perhaps not too surprising – but the extremely low scores of some other game publications *were* surprising. So it goes.

The feedback on TSG's contents was little changed from last year. You still like reviews best. News, cartoons, variants, and strategy articles also rate high. Movie and book reviews still rate very low.

We didn't print the complete demographic results, but I can tell you a little bit about the average TSG reader; he's around 20 years old, either currently a student or already well-educated, spends more than seven hours a week gaming, and probably has access to a personal computer if he doesn't already own one. Our average subscriber has been reading TSG for 32 months – so it looks like you're loyal, too.

And, as always, your comments at the bottom of the survey were interesting.

Some samples, with responses:

". . . I would be unhappy if you split into two mags, but I would buy both of them . . ." As you know by now, we *are* splitting – but each new magazine will be bi-monthly, so it is, in one sense, a re-arrangement rather than a doubling in size and cost. I know we'll lose some people with the change, but we think most of you will like it once you see it. Give us a chance, anyway.

"Why don't you do a sequel to ***Battlesuit****, called* ***Business Suit*** *– man-to-man combat in an advertising office?"* Well, if *you'd* be willing to buy 14,500 copies, we might be able to sell out of a 15,000 press run.

"I didn't see Chaosium's ***Call of Cthulhu*** *in the survey."* You're right. It should have been there, on the pre-1982 RPG listing. Ouch.

"Where is ***Traveller*** *on the pre-1982 game list?"* Ouch again.

"Why not list ***Empyrean Challenge****? It's my favorite PBM game."* No! No! Have mercy!

"Where was ***Starweb*** *under PBM games?"* Aiiiiiii . . . As you have no doubt realized by now, several games got left off the survey, not because they weren't significant, but because the compilers goofed. All we can do is grovel. Seriously: This survey is interesting to a lot of people, including us, but it gets harder each year. If we can't figure out a way to streamline it next year – possibly by using computer cards for responses – we may not be able to continue. It takes too much time, and mistakes crawl in anyhow. The responses as tabulated have been carefully checked . . . but we sure wish we had been able to enter the data automatically.

"I really appreciate 'Metal' and 'Scanner.' They are intelligent and informative and don't degrade me with neophytic language. Thank you. And I really love the fiction. 'Street Legal' was wonderful." Well, some people like the fiction . . .

"Your game-related fiction really bites the green weenie." And some people don't.

"As the player and occasional GM of an orphaned game – ***TFT*** *– I am always looking for* ***TFT*** *articles. Also, when might the rumored RPG by Steve Jackson be coming out?"* We're interested in good ***TFT*** material for *Fantasy Gamer.* (That is another Subtle Hint.) As for the new RPG: work continues to crawl along.

"The weather here has been crummy lately." Yeah, I know what you mean.

"More ***Champions*** *and* ***Star Fleet Battles****, please! . . . If Mr. Jackson and Mr. Stackpole ever get together, watch out!"* We want more material on both of these for *Space Gamer.* (Subtle Hint time again.) As for Stacker – you're right, but he wants me to move to Phoenix, and I want him to move to Austin, so we haven't gotten much done together.

"Love your magazine! We only have one game store in town, and TSG isn't available there, so I'm probably the only one in my school who gets to read it. It makes me feel superior! Some questions: (1) What happened to the 'what game are you playing most?' survey? (2) When do we get the naked elf women?" Well, why not twist their arms until they carry TSG? The "what are you playing most" question was a victim of massive non-feasance during compilation. Translation: We goofed again. We may try to do it as a special mini-survey question. The naked elf women will appear when you least expect them.

"Keep up the good work." We must have gotten that exact comment from thirty or forty of you, and something like that makes it all worthwhile. Aaron and I, and the rest of the staff, are glad you think it's good work; we'll do our best to keep it up. Thanks.

–Steve Jackson

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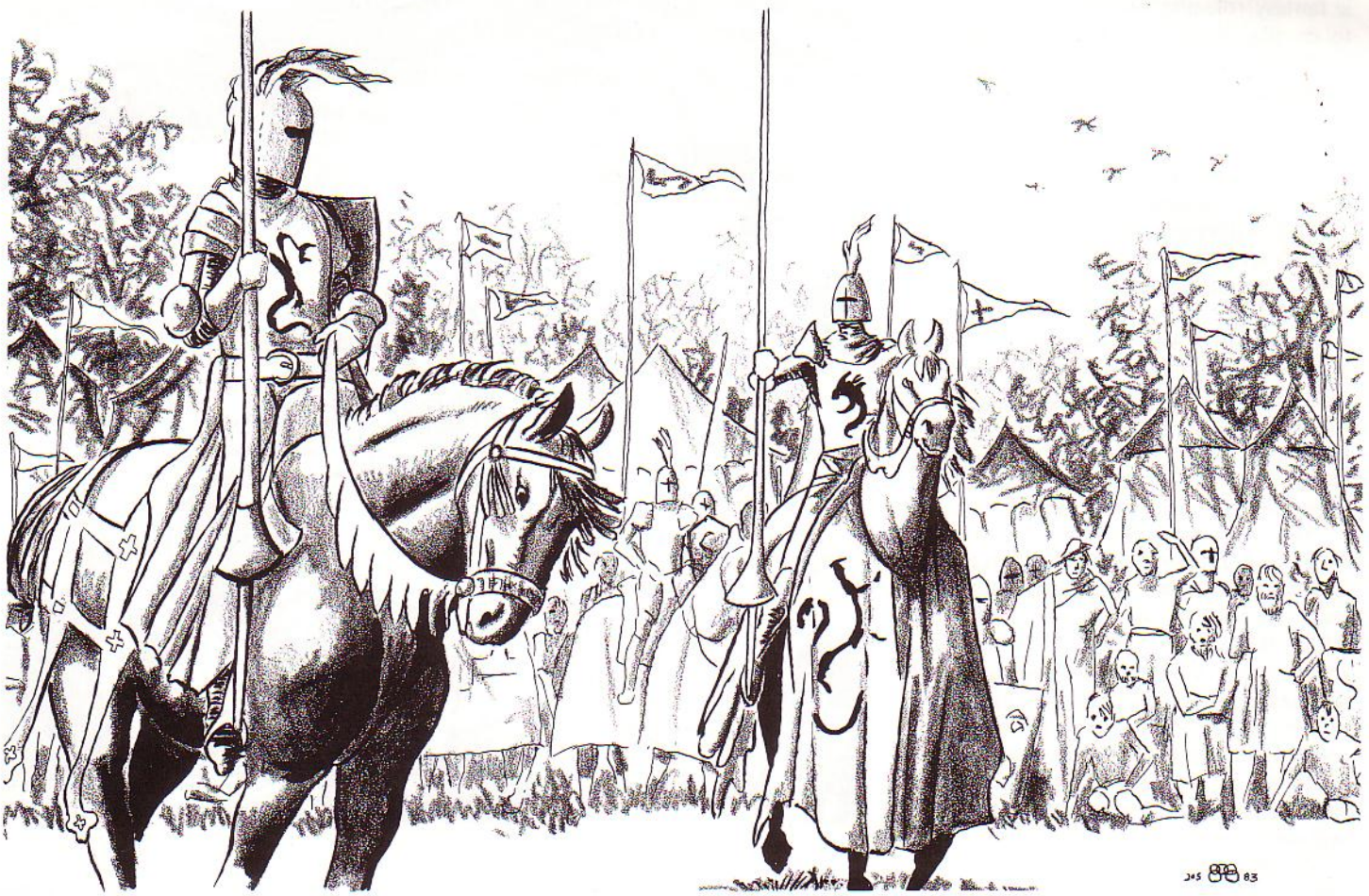

The Haunting of Harkwood

A Generic Fantasy Adventure

by Aaron Allston

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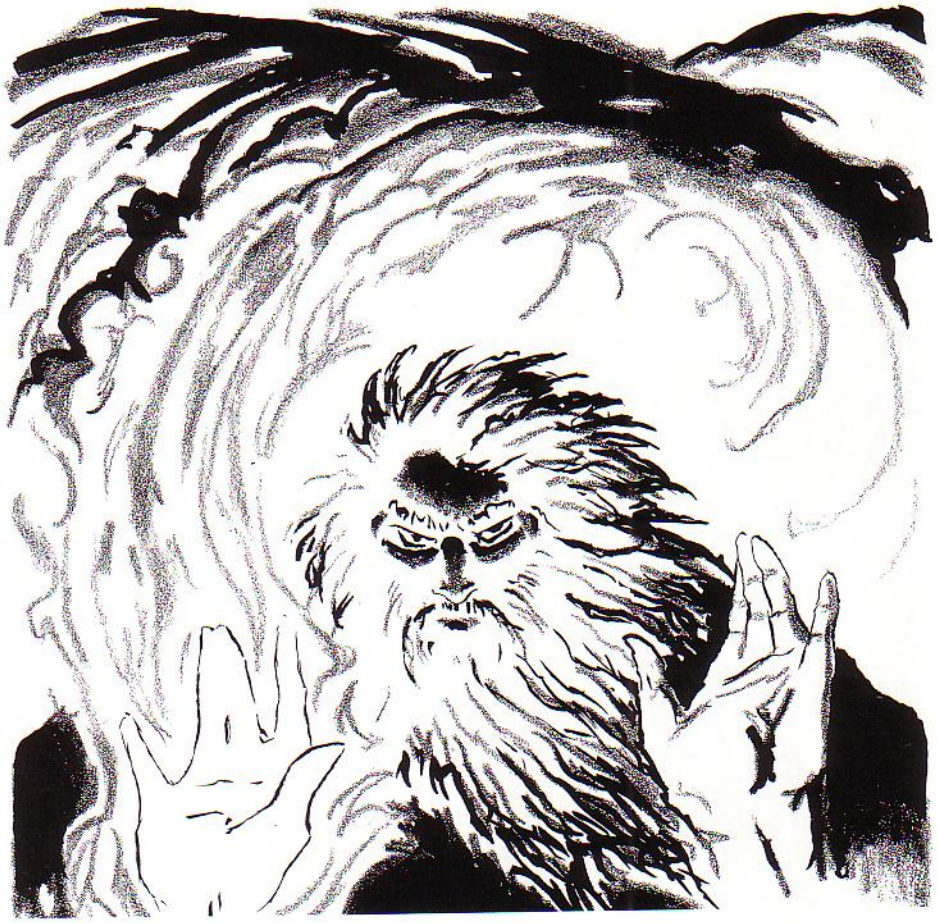
Cardboard Heroes . . . . . bind-in card

The Haunting of Harkwood is a generic fantasy role-playing adventure for four to six players plus referee. As a generic, or "universal," adventure, ***Haunting*** is presented with game terms and statistics which can be easily translated into most FRPG systems.

This adventure is not a standard episode of dungeon-crawling, questing through wilderness, or even city encounters. It's set against the backdrop of a small prize tournament, and the tournament itself is half the adventure. It requires a game-master who tends to improvise a good deal, one who is capable of making an interesting outing of an event which would be fascinating to the characters, but which might bore their more jaded players. Characters of medium experience are recommended.

Another caveat: The scenario would be of most interest to fighting characters. Thieves can prowl the crowds and cut purses. Magicians will probably find the whole thing rather boring, unless they're tourney fans. Craftsmen may spend most of their time selling wares in the merchants' bazaar. Priests and other religious sorts can spend their time converting heathens in the crowd. But the meat of the adventure is for fighters, as the GM will swiftly see.

Persons who intend to play in this adventure should read no farther. GMs, on the other hand, should probably continue . . .



Statistics

All characters in the adventure are presented with scores ranging from 1-20 on their primary characteristics, scores ranging from 01-100 on skills and weapons talents, and notes on equipment carried and personal histories and personalities.

1-20 scores for characteristics are used because they translate easily into the most systems – especially ***D&D***, ***Runequest***, and ***The Fantasy Trip***. (For systems which use percentile – 01-100 – characteristics, simply multiply the 1-20 characteristic by 5; thus, a score of 15 becomes a percentile score of 75.) When translating 1-20 scores into systems using 3-18 (rolled on 3d6) scores, simply round 1 and 2 up to 3 and 19 and 20 down to 18.

Skills are shown with percentile success scores – thus, a character with Longsword at 66% would probably strike successfully whenever making a roll of 66 or less on percentile dice. Some game systems – notably ***TFT*** – use dexterity rolls (or intelligence rolls, or strength rolls, or whatever) on 3d6 against the appropriate personal characteristic to accomplish an attack or skill use. Shown below are charts which translate 3d6 and 2d6 rolls into percentile scores. Example: A character with a 25% success in tracking would actually have a 8- roll for success on 3d6 or a 9+ roll on 2d6, and a character with a Bow rating of 85% could be presumed to have an Adjusted Dexterity or attack roll of 13-.

3d6 Roll	Probability of rolling number or less
3	0.46%
4	1.85%
5	4.62%
6	9.26%
7	16.20%
8	25.93%
9	37.50%
10	50.00%
11	62.50%
12	74.07%
13	83.80%
14	90.74%
15	95.37%
16	98.15%
17	99.54%
18	100%

2d6 Roll	Probability of rolling number or more
2	100%
3	97.22%
4	91.67%
5	83.33%
6	72.22%
7	58.33%
8	41.67%
9	27.78%
10	16.67%
11	8.33%
12	2.78%

Spells are more difficult to render into game terms. Presented with magic-using characters are listings of fairly universal spell terms, so that a GM can assume that "Mind Control" actually means "Charm Person" in ***D&D*** or "Control Person" in ***TFT***.

"Experience level" and "hit points" are also topics which the GM will have to determine. Assuming for instance, that the GM is going to be running 5th- to 7th-level characters through ***Harkwood***, the GM should make the highest-level NPCs around 7th-8th levels and give them average or slightly above-average hit points for their levels. ***TFT*** level and hits to kill are dependent upon Dexterity and Strength, of course, so use the appropriate personal scores listed for the NPCs.

In *RuneQuest,* weapons ability scores are a good indication of level of competence (in fact, if the weapons scores presented for NPCs threaten to overwhelm the player-characters, you may wish to tone them down) and points are dependent upon CON (with some modifiers); use the "health" score listed for each NPC.

As for weapons damage and the like – simply use the correct damage for the appropriate weapon from the appropriate game system.

The Adventure

Fenmarc, Baron of Harkwood (a fairly insignificant barony in a forested section of the game-world kingdom being used) has called one of his periodic prize tourneys. Baron Fenmarc's tourneys are usually two-day affairs consisting of a jousting list (for nobles), a foot list (for commoners), an archery competition (for anyone) and a last-day Grand Melee (also for any entrant), plus a merchants' bazaar, an open-air feast and court (on the night of the second day), and other entertainments. Typically, ten to fifteen knights compete in the joust, twenty to thirty commoners compete in the footmen's list, and thirty to forty people compete in the archery tourney; overall, upwards of four or five hundred people typically attend the event.

Player-characters can become involved in any number of ways. If they are noble (or if some of them are noble), the high-ranking sorts might have been invited to participate – as a courtesy if they are from the area, or by personal invitation from Fenmarc if they happen to be travelling through Harkwood. If none of the PCs is noble, they might be competing in the footmen's or archery tourney, or simply attending the bazaar and feast or watching the fighting.

Of course, an adventure is not likely to be as simple as a tournament and feast. There are two complicating factors.

Since long before the arrival of man into this part of the continent – perhaps since before the emergence of man into the world – the Eilythry have lived in the Harkwood forests. Eilythry are a race of long-lived manlike beings possessed of translucent white skin, tall and spectrally thin bodies, and unnatural grace and fleetfootedness – and it is their presence which has for centuries given rise to legends of the wood being haunted.

The Eilythry, a peaceful and vegetarian race long divorced from violence, have watched bemusedly as mankind invaded the forests, cutting down trees, slaying and eating wildlife, and creating ugly permanent structures and hideous beaten roads and smelly colonies. Isolated pockets of Eilythry gradually became cut off from one another. The old race slowly, slowly began to fade – for while they are extremely long-lived, the Eilythry bred seldom and the despondency they began to feel occasionally interrupted or suspended their mating rituals.

And now has come the final atrocity – the Eilythry lord, eldest of the clan, has been found hacked and gutted near a human road, obviously by human weapons. The presence of red blood (the Eilythry's is pinkish and transparent) indicates that the attacker was wounded, but the remaining elders consider that things have gone too far and the human invader must be driven forth. And, while the Eilythry have not known violence in many hundreds of years, they have preserved one warlike art – *ta-kera,* a stylized martial art utilizing the spear. *Ta-kera* is ritualized and dancelike, but still a dangerous martial art, relating to the original Eilythry spear combat as Kendo does to the swordsmanship of the samurai. So the Eilythry have taken up their spears . . .

There is yet another complicating factor. Lord Telberan, one of Baron Fenmarc's two closest advisors, is quite the opportunist and is secretly determined to be the next Baron of Harkwood; he is currently the most aggressive suitor for the hand of Lady Aylara, Fenmarc's daughter, and has for some time now been placing himself in situations pleasing to the eye of the Crown while occasionally embarrassing or otherwise inconveniencing Fenmarc. Yes, Telberan will be able to make use of some of the upcoming situations . . .

Components

Included with this adventure, along with explanatory text, are several things which will enable the GM to improvise the adventure around the player-characters' choices of actions throughout the course of the adventure. Included are a map of the general area of Harkwood where the tournament is taking place, a map of the tournament site, (showing the list field, the archery field, Fenmarc's retreat manor, the merchants' bazaar, and other points of interest), a sheet of *Cardboard Heroes* miniatures bound into the center of this magazine (showing all the major characters of interest, some Eilythry, and a couple of mounted knights), universal descriptions of all the major non-player-character participants, and a timeline showing what will probably happen when.

Timeline

Day 0 (The Day Before the Tourney's Start):

By dusk, all the major participants in the tournament should have arrived at the Harkwood site. The higher-ranking of these, of course, will be quartered in Fenmark's retreat manor; the rest will camp on a field slightly removed from the fields used for the tournament. A large canopy has been set up in the merchants' bazaar by a tavernkeeper, who is busily dispensing beverages and cheer into the night. Player-characters should be arriving on the scene by now, if they are not here already.

Shortly after night has fallen, a local hunter will stagger out of the forest and toward the nearest light he can see – that selfsame taverner's tent. The hunter, a burly man named Morgis, who was chief contender in this year's footmen's tourney, is so no more; when he staggers into the taverner's tent, he is mortally wounded, with spear wounds and a pale pinkish syrupy stuff splashed all over his body. He manages to croak, "It was a h'ant/ In the forest/I killed it" before messily expiring – this, in full view of all the people in the tent and anyone who charged over from the manor to investigate.

Lord Dorlyn, Fenmarc's other (more trustworthy) advisor will order the corpse put in a wagon and taken back to Morgis' village. Agrast, a local lunatic who pretends to be a wizard (but whom everyone knows to be a charming charlatan with knowledge of sleight of hand and stage magic) seems unnaturally disturbed by the goo all over Morgis and takes some in a small phial before leaving the scene. He will not discuss his perturbation with anyone who notices it and asks. Naturally, it's a little while longer before the party in the taverner's tent resumes its normal cheerfulness . . .

Day 1 (The Joust, the Drama)

An hour or so after dawn, Arvin, Baron Fenmarc's personal herald, will risk life and limb by awakening all those encamped in the field. Two hours after that, he will announce the opening of the Prize Tournament of Baron Fenmarc. The knights, in armor and wielding blunt lances, will begin their jousting runs.

Refer to the map of the tourney field. Low wooden barricades run the length of the joust field. Each knight starts at one end of the list, charging toward his opponent with the barricade to his left. As they're using lances ranging from fourteen to seventeen feet, they will roll to hit when they're in range with the weapons (about five hexes apart on the tourney-site map), not when they're adjacent to one another.

If a to-hit roll is successful, the target has been struck. If the to-hit roll is unsuccessful, the target has obviously been missed. Consider both to-hit rolls simultaneous – that is, both opponents get to roll before effect of damage are calculated. Roll normal damage for a lance attack, then divide by half (the weapons are blunted). But if the initial damage roll was in excess of 6 points of damage (*before* dividing), there is a chance that the person struck will be knocked from his horse by the force of the blow – he must make a Horsemanship or Dexterity roll (or whatever sort of roll is appropriate to the game system) to keep to his saddle. If the damage roll was much in excess of 6 points damage (before dividing), keeping a-saddle will be more difficult: -1 (or 5% for every 2 points damage the character actually takes.)

If the Horsemanship or Dexterity roll fails, then the rider falls to the ground and has lost the bout.

EXAMPLE: Sir Darrek and Sir Careth are *TFT* characters. Darrek is DX 18, chainmail and large shield (thus 5 hits stopped, ADX 14). Careth is DX 19, plate armor and large shield (thus 7 hits stopped, ADX 12). At the herald's cry, they bring their horses to gallop. At the range of their lances – 5 hexes apart – each knight rolls to hit. Darrek rolls a 13 and hits. Careth rolls an 11 and also hits. With his higher ADX, Darrek rolls damage first, for 10 points on Careth. This divides to 5 "actual" points of damage on Careth. Careth rolls 7 points of damage on Darrek, which rounds to 4. In each case, the armor has stopped all the damage. Now each must make a Dex roll to stay in saddle. Darrek must roll a 14- (his ADX) minus 1, (because the lance exceeded the necessary damage by 1, and 1 ÷ 2 = 1) for a net roll of 13-. He rolls a 12 and thus is still in the saddle, but doubtless reeling from the near-fall. Now Careth must roll his ADX (12-). Darrek's roll on him was 4 greater then necessary, 4 ÷ 2 =2, so Careth must roll a 10-. He rolls an 11, and thus falls from his saddle; Darrek has won the bout. (Note: if the game-system being used has an adequate jousting procedure, use it instead; this is intended as a stopgap system for games with no joust rules.)

If two knights make a pass with neither being knocked from his saddle, then they return to their respective ends of the field, pick up fresh lances (if their previous ones hit, presume they broke); and charge one another again.

This joust is a double-elimination contest, so a knight will still be in the running until he has been defeated twice; at that time he is out of the competition.

Scuttlebutt has it, for newcomers to the area, that Sir Actys and Dame Jaenyth are the knights to beat in this list; of course, one or more of the player-characters may be better and walk away with the tourney.

The field this year will have 16 knights competing (including any PCs in competition). Thus, the first round will be eight bouts, and the second round will also have eight bouts (as no one could have been defeated twice in the first round). By the end of the third round, some knights will have been defeated twice and will drop from competition. The contest so continues until one winner is chosen. In any round which has an odd number of competitors, one fighter will "fight the bye" – a defeated fighter will be called in to combat him, but if the fighter still in competition is unhorsed, it does not count as a defeat. The bye is fought simply to keep all contestants at a similar stage of exhaustion.

Incidentally, the GM need not go through the die-rolling rigamarole on each bout not involving a player-character; however, the GM should definitely give a bout-by-bout account of what is going on and who is still in competition, any spectacular bouts, etc. It makes the whole adventure seem more real.

The whole joust will take a number of hours, with frequent breaks being called in the action at the later hours. Pages will roam the stands with water-buckets and ladles, and the taverner's tent will no doubt be in operation, with runners bringing drinks to thirsty customers on or around the field.

At the joust's end, Fenmarc's daughter, Lady Aylara, will award to the winner the prize for this tourney: a matched weapon set of dress saber and dress knife, both with etched blades and inlaid hilts. The blades themselves are of average fighting quality.

The assemblage will break up after the awarding of the prize, with Arvin, the herald, announcing that a "drama will be held for the enjoyment of the assembled goodfolk" at dusk. This will leave a couple of hours for the assembled goodfolk to retire to their camps or the taverners' tents to dine and clean up.

At dusk, the selfsame stands from which the spectators watched the joust will be filled by spectators present for the drama. First, Agrast the charlatan performs a nice display of stage magic, with fire-eating and disappearing/reappearing birds and other such nonsense. Then the drama, entitled "The Woodbeast" (a melancholy – some say dreary – modernization of a local legend about a man who is cursed to change into a beast) is performed.

But the player-characters probably won't be able to sit through and enjoy the presentation. The most sharpsighted of them will notice Agrast packing up from his performance, leaving his materials beside the stands, and heading off bemusedly into the woods. The same sharpsighted individual will also observe, off to the side of the point Agrast enters the woods, a pale shape flitting through the trees.

If any PCs follow Agrast into the woods, they will find him a hundred feet or so in from the forest's edge, standing perfectly still, staring off into the trees. The instant they catch sight of him, though, they'll see a pale shape flit away from behind Agrast, a shape the charlatan was evidently unaware of. If the characters ask him what he's doing here, he'll talk, in a detached and troubled kind of way, about Them – They're here, They're avenging Their dead, it's been so long . . . if the characters ask him what They are, he'll lead them out of the woods and to his tent, where he'll scrabble around, looking for a book he says he had out just a while ago.

After a few more moments' search, he will confirm that the book is missing – and what a loss, one of the few surviving copies of *Remnants in the Deep Woods* by Alfinvius of Hotast . . . It will become evident to the party that Agrast is more than a little off the deep end. If there are any serious students of magic among the group (not just field magicians, but individuals who've spent time and interest on a study of magic and magic folklore), they'll remember that *Remnants* is a genuine tome, a detached and garbled bestiary of deepwoods horrors, written some 2,000 years before.

Agrast will disappear that night, after the player-characters have left.

Day 2 (The Surprise, the Footman's Contest, the Archery Contest)

The next morning, probably before the player-characters wake, the tourney-goers will have an unpleasant surprise: Several folk were slain in the fringes of the woods last night, sometimes within feet of the locations of others left alive. Two guards were found slain; two pairs

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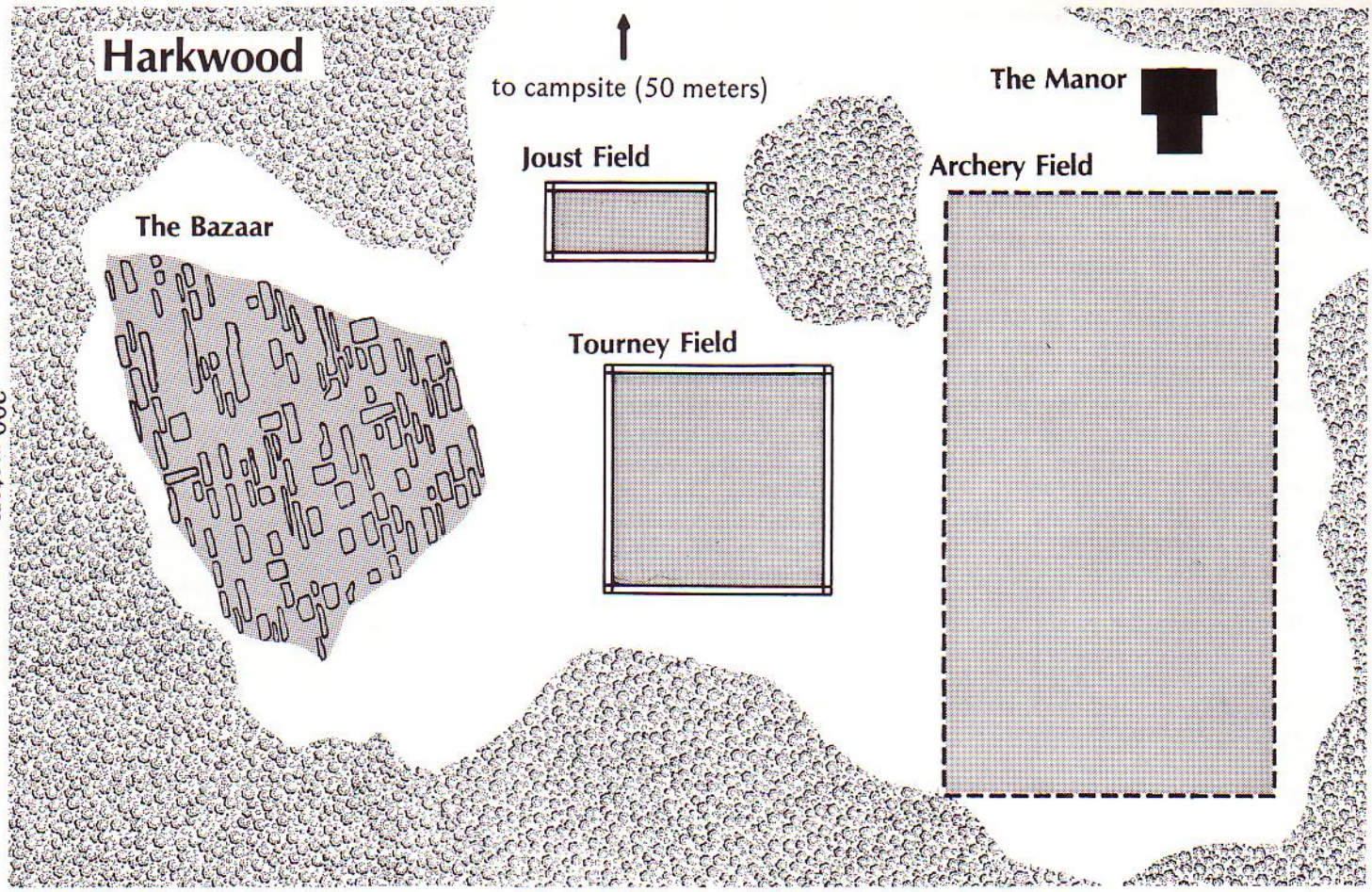
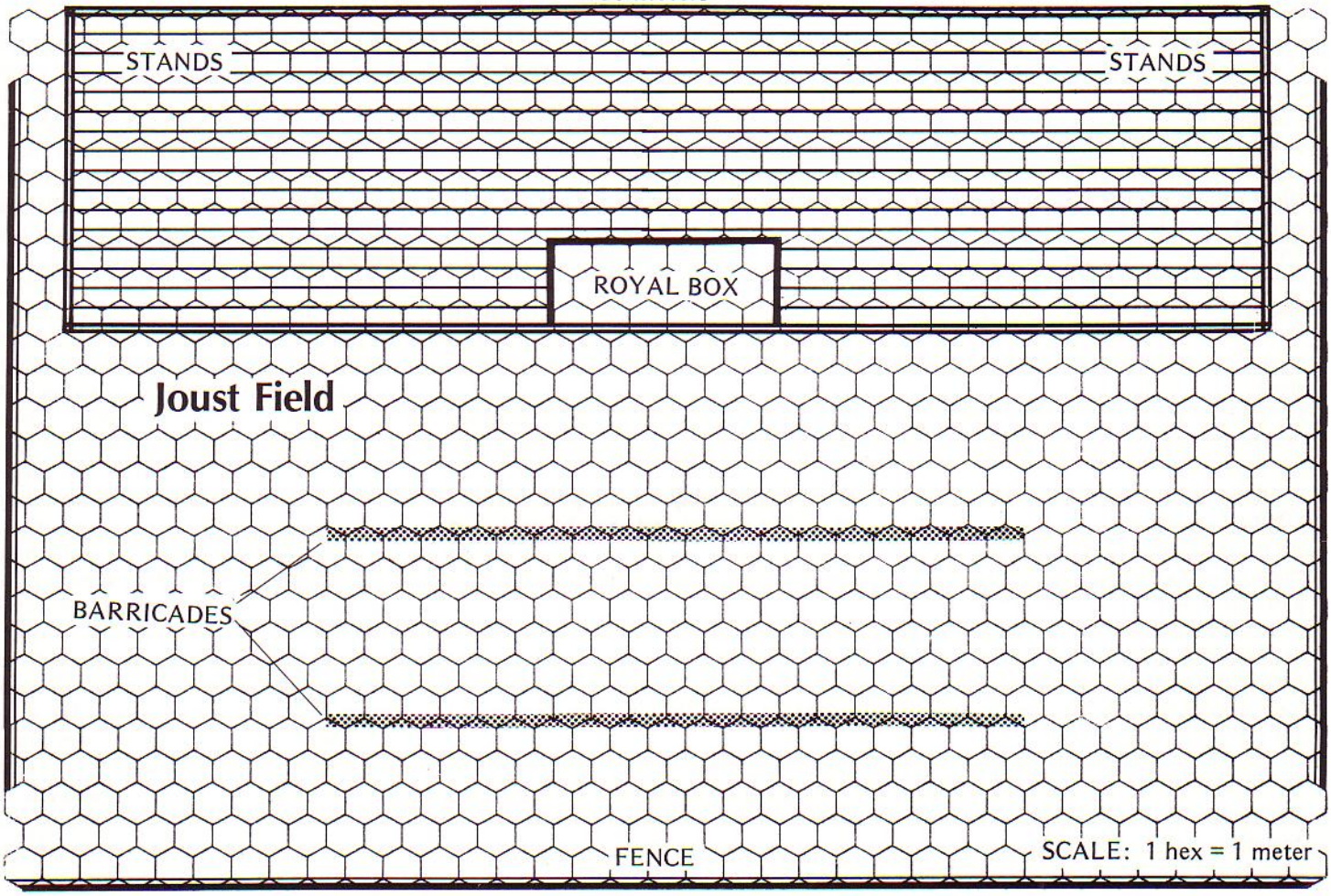
Dame Jaenyth
(mounted)


Harkwood
to campsite (50 meters)
The Manor
Joust Field
Archery Field
The Bazaar
Tourney Field
200 meters
400 meters


STANDS
STANDS
ROYAL BOX
Joust Field
BARRICADES
FENCE
SCALE: 1 hex = 1 meter

of trysting couples were likewise found murdered; and a merchant who'd awakened late to answer Nature's call never made it back to his tent. All were found at the edges of the wood by morning guards, and all were pierced through as though speared to death.

Baron Fenmarc announces that he believes there to be a madman at work in the forest –do not be alarmed, foresters and guards will track the man down, and for the time being people should stay in groups of three or more – there is little chance that the madman would attack several people at once. Two guards are immediately assigned to Lady Aylara for protection. The event goes on uninterrupted, and the bodies are removed. Word does fly, though, about the death of Morgis the Hunter the other night – the fact that he, too, was pierced with spear-like stabs, and had claimed to have killed a "H'ant" – and the rumor of haunts goes up, especially among the commoners.

The archery competition and footmen's tourney are held simultaneously, diappointing any who'd wanted to attend both.

In the archery tourney, the contestants – a total of 32 entrants, including player-characters – are adjudged by point totals accrued throughout the contest rounds. Each round consists of ten arrows shot at targets the size of round-shields; the targets are painted in the semblance of eyes, with a white band to the outside, a smaller blue band between outer ring and inner, and a black dish-sized "dot" in the center. Missing the target entirely gains the archer no points; hitting the white gains him 2 points; hitting the blue gains 5, and hitting the black gains 10. The first round is fired from 30 paces (about 30 yards), the second from 60 paces, and the third from 100 paces. At the end of the match, point totals are tallied – each contestant has a page, similar in function to a golfer's caddy, to keep track of his score – and the contestant with the highest point total wins. In case of a tie, the two winners continue with subsequent rounds at the 100-pace distance until, at the end of a round, one contestant has more points than the other. He is the winner, and is awarded a handtooled and matching set of archer's accoutrements: quiver, belt, baldric, and bracers, plus a place at the baron's table at tonight's feast. A young lady named Mara of Toren is the favorite for this competition.

(*Referee's Notes*: Many RPG systems are limited in that they do not provide for more than combat bowmanship – fast-moving and close-range archery use. If there's *no way* in a specific system for a character to make a lengthy shot – despite the fact that it was done in genuine history – you might find it advisable to delete this entire competition from the adventure. As a rule of thumb, say that, if a character *can* make a lengthy shot and barely makes his to-hit roll, he has hit the white; if he makes his roll by 3 or more – that is, 15% better than he needed – he has hit the blue, and if he makes it by 7 or 35% better than necessary, he has struck the black.)

The footmen's tourney is fought somewhat like the joust, but is sweatier and bloodier. Only blunted weapons are allowed; blunted weapons do one-half listed damage. The double-elimination rules from the joust are in effect here; a competitor is not eliminated until he has been beaten in two bouts.

A bout is over if (a) one opponent yields, (b) if a character has lost over one-fourth his hit points (this is for systems which do not differentiate between damage to body parts, and presumed that there is a marshal governing the fight, like a boxer's referee, who can call for a fight to be halted when he perceives that one fighter has lost, or (c) if the marshal perceives that one fighter has been wounded to the point that he should no longer be fighting (this can be used in systems where determination is made between damage to different areas of the body. Examples of a fighter who should not be on the field include one who has lost half the hit points to two of his limbs, one who has sustained any sort of critical wound, one who is so tired that he cannot defend himself – for those systems which have some sort of endurance considerations – etc.). Remember that only blunted weapons are used, weapons which do one-half (rounded down) listed damage.

No armor heavier than chainmail is allowed in the footmen's tourney, and armor as light as a leather cuirass is allowed but discouraged. All swords and axes (if blunted) and mace-type weapons are allowed; flail weapons and pole weapons (including spears) may not be used. The object of this tourney is not to kill one's opponent, but to beat him, and to win the pouch of silver that is the tourney's prize. (The exact amount would vary from game system to system, but should be sufficient to allow the average commoner to have two or three substantial nights on the town.) Twenty-seven footmen, including player-characters, will be competing in this list; Gaeris, a thick-set youth from a nearby village, is the favorite to win (he used to be the perpetual second-place winner, after the unfortunate Morgis).

But here's where the event gets complicated – Lady Aylara, who was supposed to award the pouch of silver to the tourney winner, has not shown up, a trivial *faux pas* – but where is she?

A search called by her father reveals, in the space of a few minutes, the bodies of her two guards under the stage where Agrast performed the night before – the stage had been dragged off to an unfrequented area of the tourney ground, next to a copse of trees. The two guards have been stabbed to death, as though by forceful spear-blows. And the word "haunt" is repeated back and forth among all assembled . . .

What Happens Next

Now that we have gotten to the point where there are so many random elements in play that a further timeline would be out of the question. The GM must rely on his knowledge of what is going on and improvise around his characters' actions.

Lady Aylara has, in reality, been kidnapped by henchmen of the opportunistic Lord Telberan, who had her guards speared from behind to foist the blame on the supposed "madman" of the night before. He has her hooded, gagged, and bound in a very well hidden glade in the forest, now guarded by the three men who killed her former guards. She was gagged, hooded and tied so quickly that she cannot identify her attackers. Lord Telberan intends to wait for an opportune time in the search he knows is to come, and then will stage a fight with the "madman" to "rescue" Aylara – she will only be able to hear the fight, and will supposedly believe Telberan's story that he attacked and drove off her kidnapper. So Telberan ends up a hero – or so he thinks. For he still thinks that the killings were indeed the work of a madman . . .

Agrast the Charlatan isn't really mad; faced with the prospect of spending too much time with a band of inquisitive adventurers last night, he simply lapsed into his typical "Senile Old Faker" act until they wandered off bored; then he began his own investigations. He is no magician, but is a talented woodsman and sage, and suspects that these events are the result of Eilythry vengeance. He will stick to the woods, relying on his phenomenal stealth and woodsmanship to

protect him from the Eilythry hunters until he can observe the best way to escape – whether 'tis on his own or with a party of people attempting to leave. One thing that remains a mystery to him is: Who took his book?

Which brings us to *Tekker the Ugly,* another NPC who can be thrown in any time as an encounter or a good ally for the PCs to have. Tekker's not his real name, nor is he in reality ugly; he's a spy for the Crown, on the site to see if Fenmarc is really as inept as he's appeared these last several months, or whether he's a victim of some sort of political maneuvering. He doesn't know the answer to that yet, but he knows that he's stumbled onto a mystery. It was he who found and stole Agrast's book after watching the old man behave erratically several hours before, and now he's aware that there's something out in the forest – no mad killer, but a race of woodsbeings. (Note to GMs: If one of the player-characters just happens to be a spy for the Crown, he might serve in this role in place of Tekker, making for a more complex venture).

The Eilythry, forty-three in all – the last survivors of a race that once boasted a hundred thousand – are operating in the forest, just outside the humans' range of vision. They operate singly, attacking anyone they find and then ting off to the next victim. Eilythry are supremely confident and willing to singly engage up to five or six individuals. However, as removed as they've stayed from humankind, they still regard man as being little more advanced than his fur-wearing club-bearing ancestor, and are not yet prepared for heavily-armored, competent swordsmen of the sort they'll be encountering. A problem with the Eilythry mind is its slow adaptability to change; it would take the average Eilythry years to reorient itself to the thought of man as a technological, tool-using creature, and that will prove the Eilythry's undoing. They'll attack groups of searchers, do massive damage, and be brought down one by one. This day, the Eilythry race will be progressively, inevitably wiped out by searchers out to find Aylara and combat "h'ants."

Baron Fenmarc, of course, will order an immediate search for his daughter and the "mad killer," promising a rather formidable reward to the individual or individuals who find them. Of the five hundred or so attendees of the event, about 30% will arm up and head off into the woods in bands of five or six – hopefully, the player-characters will be among those, probably forming a group unto themselves. The remaining 70% of the attendees will gather in the camp area, with lots and lots of guards posted around, too many for even Eilythry to assault. Fenmarc will be with one of the parties in the woods, accompanied by Sir Actys and Dame Jaenyth and their squires.

The Adventure's Progress

As noted, there are any number of ways the adventure can progress, depending on the player-characters' actions and the GM's sense of confusion or viciousness. What *will* happen, though, is that about half of the people searching in the woods will not return alive. Most groups of five to six will be encountered by at least one Eilythry. The Eilythry will be able to kill half the members of an average group before being dragged down by the rest. (This presumes that the player-characters constitute an *above*-average group, as is Baron Fenmarc's group.) Some groups of humans will be encountered by more than one Eilythry (one after another) and be utterly wiped out. Still more infrequent groups will encounter no one but corpses. This presents the opportunity for a good GM to present a chilling and ominous running fight, as the player-characters tramp through the forest, are confronted and perhaps injured by an Eilythry before killing it, continue on, stumbling across the occasional unlucky band of searchers, hearing screams far off in the distance as the afternoon thickens toward dusk . . . and they meet another Eilythry . . . and another . . .

What may happen (some suggestions for the creative GM):

Lady Aylara's captors could be assaulted by an Eilythry, and the scene of that fight be stumbled upon by the PCs just as the young lady is about to be killed. Lord Telberan may escape just before the heroes' arrival, or may use their timely arrival and combat with the Eilythry to carry Aylara off yet again . . .

The player-characters could be surprised by the silent arrival of Agrast, who explains what's going on to them. Depending on their normal operating procedure, they might just decide "No reward is worth this," and begin battling their way cross-country to the nearest plains territory, a mere day's walk away through deep forest . . .

Lord Telberan might try to pin the "mad killer" title on one of the player-characters after staging his "rescue" of Aylara, requiring that individual's escape not only from Eilythry but from Fenmarc's men . . .

Aftermath

Of course, as most groups of searchers encounter their first Eilythry (or batch of corpses), they'll probably turn around and head their way back to camp. Whether or not they make it there is another matter.

The people left behind will see the searchers depart into the woods in late afternoon, immediately after Aylara's disappearance is noted. Within half an hour after that, the first survivors will start staggering back to camp, armed with wounds and acounts of their comrades dying and of the grim, pale, silent haunts of the Harkwood.

As the hours progress, more and more survivors will straggle back. As the day turns to night, most of the action will have resolved itself – per the suggestions above, or as the GM wishes. Throughout the early hours of the evening, the last of the Eilythry will be dying in the woods – a tragedy felt, perhaps, only by Agrast – but the human survivors will be returning until after dawn of the next day, in various degrees of health and sanity.

Fenmarc and his escort will probably survive the night's terrors, somewhat the worse for wear. Depending on the GM's choice for the course of the adventure, Aylara may make it back alive – with player-characters or non-player-character rescuers, or perhaps even (let's hope not) with a smug Telberan. As promised, her rescuer(s) will be amply rewarded.

Fenmarc's forces – both among the knights and footmen – will have been depleted by the night's rigors. Any player-character seen showing conspicuous gallantry and ability will be offered employment in Fenmarc's service. Minor nobles and squires showing exceptional ability might be knighted somewhat later on, once word has reached the Crown.

And Harkwood will remain a setting for adventures, should the GM wish, though mainly for adventures of the cloak and dagger or intrigue variety. Tekker the Ugly, after making his report to the Crown, will probably be assigned to continue his investigation of Fenmarc's capacity. Player-characters may be requested to assist him, or may be hired by the baron to find out who is spying on him and why. If Telberan has escaped the night unharmed and undiscovered, he will immediately begin his political maneuvering again. He may even be a few steps further toward achieving his goal, if he was seen to rescue Aylara. Clues dropped by the GM – such as the overhearing of certain incriminating sentences from Telberan – could alert PCs that something is not right about the sleazy nobleman. Agrast could flee into the woods to study what he can find of the Eilythry, and emerge months later with some relic of their lost magic, catapulting the characters into some other adventure. One of the player-characters could have designs on Aylara; if he is nobly-born, Telberan would perceive him as a threat and attempt to arrange for his removal from the scene . . .

And so on.

But use ***The Haunting of Harkwood*** any way you please – perhaps as just a tournament in the middle of any other sequence of adventures, without the Eilythry or Telberan's plans ever entering into it.

Character Descriptions

Below are the vital statistics for the major NPCs in ***Haunting***. Each character is represented by a 1-20 score in the characteristics Strength (STR), Grace (GRA), Health (HLT), Intelligence (INT), Willpower (WIL), Attractiveness (ATT), and Charisma (CHA). Strength defines raw physical power; Grace (also known as Dexterity) defines quickness, handiness, balance, etc.; Health (also known as Constitution) defines resistance to shock, disease, etc., and frequently modifies hit point totals; Intelligence is a measure of the character's ability to learn and utilize information; Willpower is the character's sense of self (often used as a function of the magic system); Attractiveness is the character's physical beauty; and Charisma is the character's raw personal magnetism.

The characters:

Baron Fenmarc: STR 13, GRA 12, HLT 14, INT 11, WIL 15, ATT 13, CHA 15. Broadsword 70% Other Swords 60%, Court Behavior 75%, Speechmaking 65%, Horsemanship 55%, Lance 40%, Literate.

Lady Aylara: STR 8, GRA 14, HLT 11, INT 13, WIL 15, ATT 17, CHA 13. Court Behavior 70%, Horsemanship 45%, Literate (in four additional languages).

Lord Telberan: STR 11, GRA 15, HLT 9, INT 15, WIL 14, ATT 14, CHA 11. Broadsword 50%, Other Swords 40%, Polearms 40%, Longbow 55%, Court Behavior 60%, Sleight of Hand 45%.

Sir Actys: STR 17, GRA 15, HLT 14, INT 13, WIL 12, ATT 10, CHA 14. All Swords 90%, Other HTH weapons generally 75%, Bows 70%, Lance 80%, Horsemanship 70%, Court Behavior 60%, Law 50%, Speechmaking 50%, Literate, one extra language.

Dame Jaenyth: STR 13, GRA 17, HLT 11, INT 14, WIL 13, ATT 14, CHA 15. Broadsword 90%, Other Swords 80%, Other HTH weapons usually 65%, Lance 90%, Bows 30%, Horsemanship 85%, Court Behavior 70%, Sailing 50%, Literate, three additional languages, instantaneous translator.

Agrast the Charlatan: STR 11, GRA 14, HLT 10, INT 16, WIL 14, ATT 9, CHA 16. Acting 75%, Sleight of Hand & Pickpocketing 90%, Speechmaking 50%, Stage Magic 75%, Animal Trainer 65%, Woodsmanship 95%, Stealth 90%, Magic Study 45%, Historian 40%, Literate, four additional languages.

Tekker the Ugly (actually Merrin of Halsur): STR 19, GRA 10, HLT 17, INT 13, WIL 12, ATT 10, CHA 11. Broadsword 80% most other HTH weapons 70%, pole weapons 50%, bows 30%, Acting 65%, Disguise 70%, Horsemanship 45%, Detection of Lies 40%, Stealth 60%, Enhanced Hearing, Literate, one additional language, three additional codes.

Eilythry (common): STR 10, GRA 17, HLT 10, INT 8 (wisdom and experience more than counterbalanced by lack of inventiveness or curiosity), WIL 16, ATT 7 (to humans), CHA 5 (ditto), Spear 80%, Woodsmanship 95%, Stealth 90%, Forest Survival 95%, Enhanced Hearing, Infrared Vision, Running, cannot understand human tongues. (For a real treat, you can give your characters an especially nasty Eilythry: Spear and Stealth up to 100%).

Other names to drop for NPC encounters and random opponents: (Joust) Sir Darrek, Sir Careth, Sir Ambish, Sir Loel, Squire Anya (Actys'), Squire Kand (Actys'), Squire Eilyn (Jaenyth's), Squire Hovard (Darrek's); (Footmen's) Pellin, Arik the Loud, Stafforth, Daeth, Weller of Tarmoor; (Archery, Bazaar) Dana Korsdatter, Lord Baethyn, Lady Taere, Owin the Bard, Lyana, Janier, and Mocking Myrddis.

Final Notes

In case you're curious, the arrangements for the three types of competitions described in the text don't necessarily match tournament practices of any particular time in real-life history. However, they make for a simple way to resolve such tournaments, one which can be expanded upon or altered by GMs wishing to do so and which can provide for an interesting alternative to dungeon-mashing – an alternative which makes the characters feel more at home in their culture.

Little attention has been given in this scenario to the other major function of the tourney event, the Merchants' Bazaar. This is because it was not integral to the adventure, and not all adventurers will spend time there. The GM is encouraged to go wild with improvised and spontaneous descriptions of the interesting folk encountered therein, of random events and perhaps a short-tempered duel or two between NPCs and PCs, as the player-characters' actions dictate.

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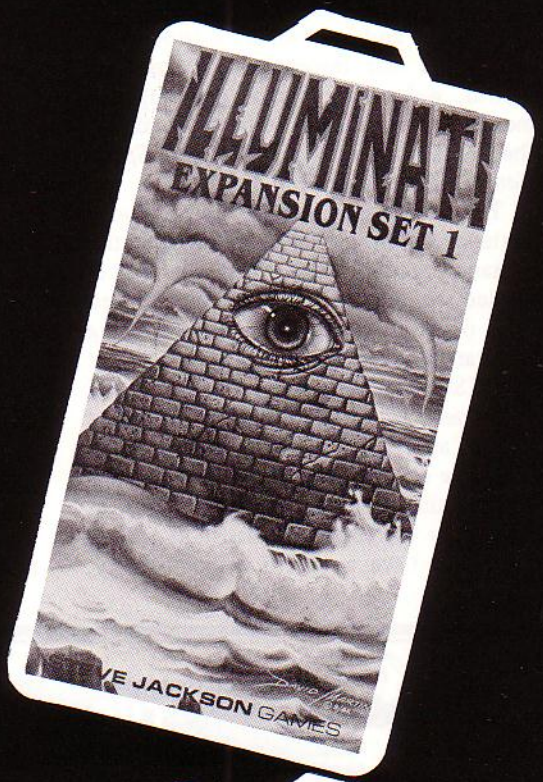

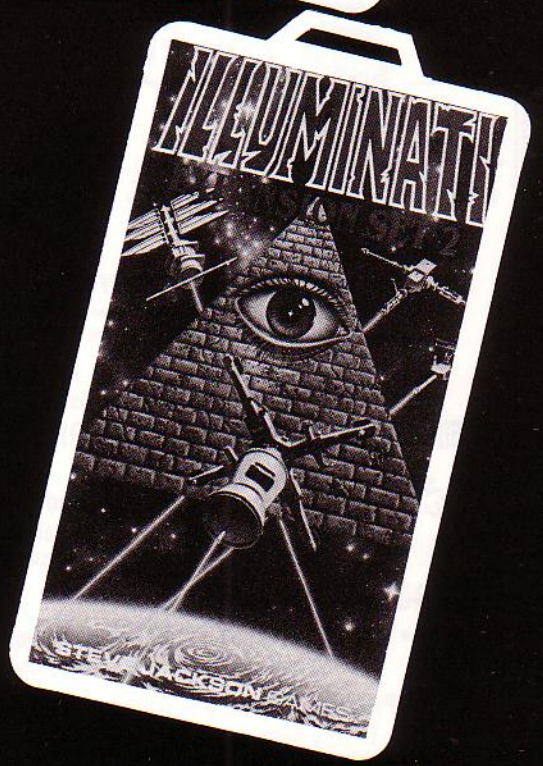

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Counter Intelligence

by Aaron Allston

We have some more details for you on the upcoming split of *The Space Gamer*. Since Steve and I sat down to tripewriter and wrote our respective columns last month, we've had lots of planning and meetings to iron out the petty details of the transformation of TSG into *Space Gamer* and *Fantasy Gamer*.

The first, minor, change (as the above sentence hints), is that we've dropped the nuisancy article – the "the." The article tended to get in the way, like untied laces on your shoe, and led to interesting manhandling of the language – was it The TSG Approach? The SG Approach? *The Space Gamer* Approach? The *Space Gamer* approach? Now we can be sure.

I'll be editing both magazines, at least for the time being. That may change as frequency increases. My assistant editors each will have a specific responsibility; Richard Steinberg will be the *Space Gamer* assistant editor, and Chris Frink will perform those chores for *Fantasy Gamer*.

The two magazines will have different approaches to layout and graphics to reflect their different orientations. However, they won't descend to excessive floweriness or tiresome hardware jargon, nor will we go in for illegible Old English or computer typefaces.

And, as for the Most Important Question of All: Yes, *Murphy's Rules* will, for the time being, be in both magazines.

Heard Around the Office

Every so often, a stray comment of peculiar import comes floating through the office. I'll pass these on as they accumulate. This month's batch:

"Inside every thin person is a fat one yearning to breathe free . . ."

"What's this trilobite doing in my martini?"

"If you ever have to barbecue your laundry, you don't have to explain it."

Marching off to War

We're about to enter the glorious Convention Season among gamers. Our next stop (long over by the time you read this column) is Aggiecon, one of Texas' premier SF conventions. I may write a few lines about it next month.

Our crew returned a week or two ago from Microcon in San Marcos, TX. There, they had a good time, met some good folk, and groused that the good movies were on too early in the day. Recreation is no easy life . . .

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NEXT ISSUE

Next month will see the debut of the first "new look" Space Gamer. *We'll have for you:*

"Big Lizzie," a cowboys vs. dinosaurs adventure from the skewed perceptions of W.G. Armintrout;

Featured Review and Designer's Notes for STAR TREK: THE ROLE-PLAYING GAME;

"The Andy Chernak Interview," as our Metal *contributing editor talks to the president of Grenadier;*

At long last GOLIATH, latest in a series of second-generation Ogres; and

Hybrid he-men.

MURPHY'S RULES

PROBABLY WITH A POUND OF FLESH ...
A player who has become expert at Yaquinto's MAN, MYTH & MAGIC may choose to become a "Sage." A Sage is not permitted to tell his fellow players any game rules or statistics .... they have to pay him for the information ...

DOES DR. McCOY KNOW?
FASA's STAR TREK: THE ROLE-PLAYING GAME describes the Klingon Agonizer as a hand-held device "applied to the left shoulder just above where the ear is located in humans."
(... Guy McLimore)

BEN SARGENT ...

CARD-CARRYING CONFUSION ...
From Schubel & Son's CATACOMBS OF CHAOS comes this word: "If the card reader cannot read your card, we will take a look at it to see if we know you're trying to do. If, despite everything, we or the computer cannot understand your action, you will receive a notice on your turn result that your character is confused." (... Drake Letcher)

NOT TO MENTION PERFORMING THE MINUTE WALTZ ....
In SJ Games' CAR WARS, it is possible for a driver, in the space of six seconds, to accelerate from 0 to 90 mph, perform as many as 25 driving maneuvers safely, and fire on three successive targets long enough to receive a sustained-fire to-hit bonus on each, all the while maintaining a steady stream of conversation with his allies ...
(... David Ladyman)

Where We're Going

Over the last few years, wargaming (or adventure gaming, or whatever you want to call it) has been increasing in popularity. One welcome side effect has been the increased recognition that the world of science fiction fandom has given to the gaming hobby. Science fiction gaming is now an accepted part of fandom; almost every convention has a couple of game tournaments, and some SF cons are now inviting game designers and publishers as guests.

The science fiction media are responding to this increased interest, as well. An occasional mention of games in a science fiction magazine is nothing new . . . but we have now hit the big time. The two top magazines in the science fiction field – *Analog* and *Asimov's Science Fiction Magazine* – have started regular coverage of SF games.

Both magazine's columns are written by Dana Lombardy, the designer of ***Streets of Stalingrad*** and associate publisher of *Game Merchandising* magazine. Incidentally, though both SF magazines are owned by Davis Publications, the two columns are not "clones" – Dana writes new material for each magazine each month. Sometimes the columns deal with things that any *Space Gamer* reader is likely to know – i.e., an explanation of game conventions – but more often they consist of reviews and commentary that you don't want to miss.

I encourage all of you to pick up both *Analog* and *Asimov's* to take a look at these columns (the rest of the magazines read pretty well, too). And, if you're already a faithful reader, you might want to write to the editors, thanking them for covering games and encouraging them to keep it up.

Autoduel Quarterly

The first issue of *Autoduel Quarterly* went to the printers a few days ago (as I write this, that is). By now, it should certainly have reached subscribers' mailboxes, and probably your local hobby shop, as well. I apologize for the delay. We had originally planned it for late January . . . we changed that to February to keep it from interfering with the schedules of the other magazines . . . and its actual debut will be late March. Oh well . . . the next issue (Summer, 2033) is scheduled for late May, and should really come out about that time. The 2033 dating? Simple. The ***Car Wars*** universe is 50 years in our future – so *ADQ* carries a date 50 years ahead of the present one.

Speaking of ***Car Wars***, we're about to go into a third printing. The new rulebook will have a number of changes – mostly small ones – to make the game run more smoothly. There will also be (hallelujah!) an index, so that you don't have to buy a new rule set (unless you want to). We'll be collecting the changes to run in *ADQ*. ***Ogre*** is about to be reprinted, as well, but there will be no changes at all.

A Trip to L-5

As this issue goes to press, I'll be leaving for the L-5 Space Development Conference in Houston. Some of the topics to be discussed there include Private Enterprise in Space, Military Space Systems, Terraforming, and Interstellar Migration; if it's as interesting as it promises to be, I'll report on it in a future *Where We're Going*.

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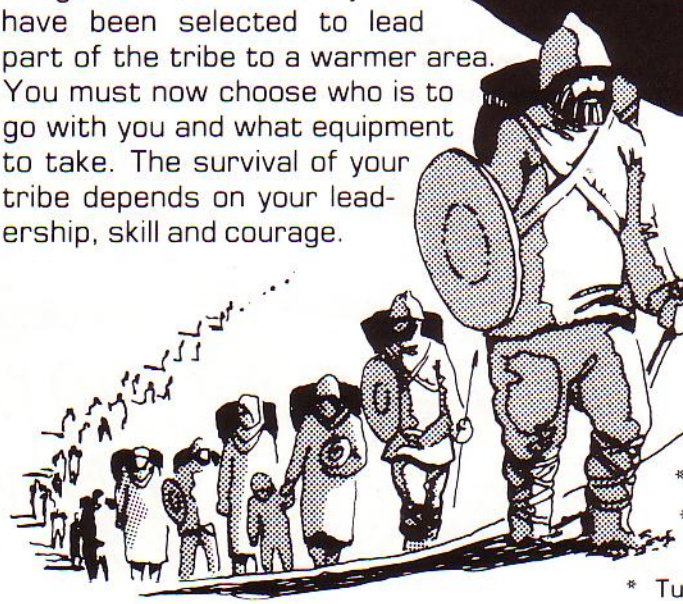

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LETTERS

Please don't publish games in TSG. It is my favorite magazine. I gladly pay the admittedly high subscription rate (for a gaming magazine) because, as far as I'm concerned, you're number one.

Games are great. The whole gaming world focuses on games. But they detract from a magazine if they are directly enclosed.

I am not an inexperienced gamer. I watched *Ares* come and go. I saw *S&T* go. I don't want to be critical, but SPI had the greatest ability to make regularly-published games. You have about the poorest.

Don't get me wrong. You are *the* best company in gaming, and don't you forget it. But you just can't expect to do even a third of what a corporation like SPI could.

Robert Hayes

I'm afraid that I can't let a couple of points you make slide by unchallenged.

First, it wasn't Ares/S&T *games that killed SPI; it was nonsurvival business practices. In contrast, SJ Games has no significant outstanding debts and has seen continuous expansion during the worst recession in recent memory.*

Second, I cannot see any evidence for our having the poorest ability to make regularly published games. Poorest of whom? With a massive backlog of marketable game design ideas, a horde of willing contributors, and a talented full-time production staff, we rate poorest?

Third, as for not accomplishing a third of what SPI could – well, give us time. We'll see.

–AA

It's always a useful deflation of an author's ego to find people who have never even heard of his work, let alone read it. (Ref your Editor's Introduction to Russell Grant Collins' recent review of my ***Man, Myth & Magic.)*** All the same, I can't help wondering if SJG staff might not benefit from a little broadening of their usual reading selection.

With just a shade more effort than asking around their "immediate environs" they will find that my last three novels, *The Greythorn Woman, Dream of Destiny* and *Dark Moon,* were brought out in hardback and paperback in the U.S. and Britain, that the publisher involved in the first two was Doubleday, Inc., the world's largest, while Holt Rinehart & Winston, one of the most prestigious publishing houses in the States brought out *Dark Moon.* Out of the eight further nonfiction books, most have seen simultaneous British and U.S. publication in hardback and paperback and one, *Occult Reich,* has gone into Spanish, Portugese, Mexican and Japanese editions. Foreign language editions of other titles are on sale in Israel, France, Holland and Italy.

As science fiction readers, unless they are very young, your staff should really have known that until about four years ago my work was appearing in U.S. magazines like *Analog, Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction, Worlds of If,* and *Galaxy*. Naturally they would have had no way of knowing my short fiction has also been published in Britain, Ireland, Norway, Sweden, Finland, Belgium, Holland, Zambia, South Africa, France, and Germany as well. (Or that I'm a founder member of World SF.)

None of this makes me another Hemingway, but it does, I think, deserve a little better than the implication in your review introduction that Yaquinto's reference to my professional background in their advertising was a baseless hype.

Herbie Brennan
County Kildare, Ireland

Thanks for the self-introduction. Incidentally, my intro to the ***MM&M*** *review did not imply that Yaquinto's mention of your professional background was "baseless hype" – rather, I was commenting upon Yaquinto's habit, in its advertisements, of promoting your virtues without introducing you to the gaming public. I still feel that such an introduction is necessary, in light of that advertising campaign.*

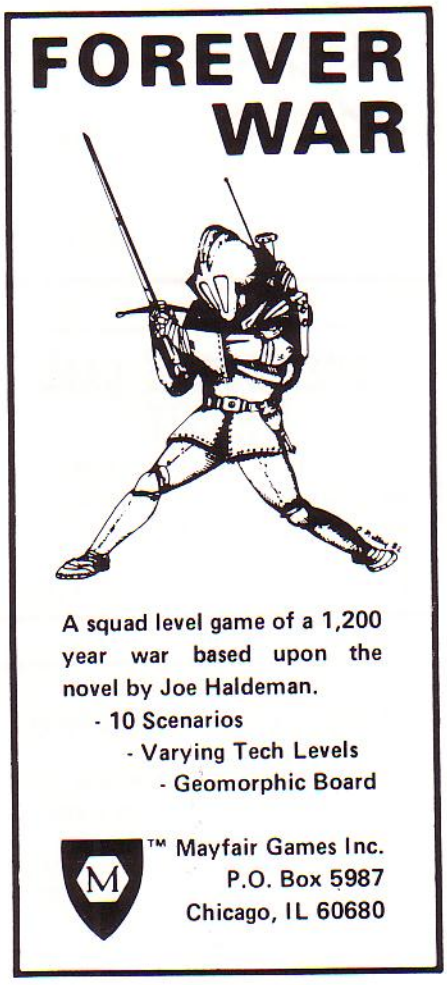
–AA

Robot Safari (TSG 60) was the best adventure you've printed yet, even better than ***Lair of the Fat Man,*** and also the most creatively presented. (Nice pseudo-photos by Denis; the one on page 28 makes me think he's been studying the great Will Eisner's classic *Spirit* tales.) ***Safari*** lends itself to interesting tinkering: Suppose Buck is really an agent for the smugglers, only posing as a drunk? When the expedition radios its news back, Buck could prepare a little welcoming committee to greet it upon its return to the main cache point. If he does this, the players would need help, so maybe Skukie had a remote-control box that could direct the actions of the robot animals; or maybe the Hauler fortuitously conks out a few miles away from cache point and the party allies with a Zalika sect which wants to drive Robot Safari from their land; or maybe with the 15 enslaved Zalika natives is a captured law-enforcement agent, operating undercover, who will help the party. All sorts of really neat options.

You know, if you published a magazine full of these adventures, for one game or several, I would probably buy it (if they weren't simply reprinted from TSG). I say this, even though I don't play ***FutureWorld***! I don't mean a regular periodical of them, I mean a one-shot of, say, 60 pages for $5 or $6.

Another, even more intriguing possibility, would be a TSG-sized role-playing game complete with self-contained adventures and simple rules. Suppose you have an RPG concept that doesn't lend itself to an open-ended campaign (say ***Hugoes & Harlans).*** The first 16 or 20 pages would detail the rules, and then there would be three or four 8-page adventures, possibly connected, counters and map bound in the middle, all for six or seven dollars. A good value, a much better way to package interesting but limited conceptions like ***Pirates & Plunder*** or that high-school RPG [***Alma Mater*** – AA], and with a magazine format you might be able to break into a new market.

Allen Varney
Stanford, CA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The staff will make reasonable efforts to check reviews for factual accuracy, but opinions expressed by reviewers are not necessarily those of the magazine.

★★★★★

Game items for which *Space Gamer* reviews have been assigned or received include ***Adventure Class Ships Volume II***, (The) ***Alien, Cops, Crooks, & Civilians***, ***Droids***, ***Final Conflict***, ***FORCE***, ***Fringeworthy***, ***FTL 2448***, ***Galac-Tac***, ***Ganglord***, ***GI Assault Team***, *Handbook of the Marvel Universe*, ***Illuminati Expansion Sets I*** and ***II***, ***Operation Morpheus***, ***San Succi***, ***Shuttle Intercept***, ***Soldiers of Fortune***, ***Star Trek*** (PBM), ***Star Trek*** (RPG), and ***Warboid World.***

Game items for which *Space Gamer* is seeking reviews include *Autoduel Quarterly*, ***Boarding Party***, ***Cassiopeian Empire***, revised ***Champions***, ***Espionage***, ***Famine in Far-Go***, ***Fasolt in Peril***, ***Galactic Adventurers***, ***High Ranger Guard***, ***Illuminati***, ***Interstellar Wars***, ***M.I.S.S.I.O.N.***, ***Race in Space***, ***Spectre***, ***Star Explorer***, ***Star Sector Atlas 2***, ***Star Sentry***, Castle's *Super Heroes*, Castle's *Survival Force*, ***Traveller Starter Edition***, ***Volturnus/Planet of Mystery***, and ***Voyager I.***

Game items for which *Fantasy Gamer* reviews have been assigned or received include ***Arena Combat***, ***Ascent to Hell***, *Battlemats*, ***Cards of Power***, ***Crystal Caverns***, *Dark Crystal* miniatures, ***Death to Setanta***, ***Earthwood***, ***Endless Quests***, ***Feudal Lords***, ***The Glastonbury Labyrinth***, ***Kingdom of the Sidhe***, ***Lords of the Dark Horse***, ***Newgrange Reactivated***, ***Rolemaster***, ***Silverdawn***, ***The Sunken Lands***, ***Swordbearer***, ***Terra II***, *Through Dungeons Deep*, ***Tome of Mighty Magic***, ***Treasure of Unicorn Gold***, and ***Zork III.***

Game items for which *Fantasy Gamer* is seeking reviews include ***Against the Cult of the Reptile God***, ***Alluring Alcoves***, ***Ardor***, ***Aztec***, ***Bavenlon***, ***Blizzard Pass***, ***Book of Treasure Maps III***, ***Chilling Chambers***, ***Complete Dungeon of the Bear***, ***Corsairs of Tallibar***, ***Curse of Xanathon***, ***Dark Folk***, ***Demons of Dundurn***, ***The DM's Book of Nasty Tricks***, ***Druids of Doom***, ***Dungeon Maps***, ***Gamemaster***, ***Ghoulash***, ***Goblin***, ***Heroes and Villains***, ***Kamakura***, ***Monster Squash***, ***Necromancer***, ***Oracle***, ***Pavis***, ***Pirates of Hagrost***, ***Questers***, ***Question of Gravity***, ***Questworld***, ***RuneQuest Companion***, ***Runes***, ***Sanctuary***, ***Search for the Lost City***, ***Shield Maidens of Sea Rune***, ***Society of Sorcery***, ***The Tarot Quest***, ***Thieves' Guild 7***, ***Warrior***, ***Warrior-Lords of Darok***, ***Weapons & Castles***, ***Witches Court Marshes***, ***Wizard's World***, ***Wondrous Weapons***, and ***The World of Silverdawn.***

BATTLESUIT (Steve Jackson Games); $5.00. Designed by Steve Jackson. 24-page rulebook, 275 double-sided, oversized counters, 21" x 32" map, ziplock bag for counters, plastic Pocket Box. Two players. Playing time 30 minutes to 2 hours. Published 1983.

BATTLESUIT is the latest in the line of ***Ogre/G.E.V.*** games, set in the same 21st century nuclear war. Where ***Ogre*** and ***G.E.V.*** concentrate on vehicles, BATTLESUIT deals with the man-to-man conflicts. Both sides (Paneuropean and Combine) use powered armor-clad infantry with micro-nuke-firing weapons. The game is every bit as deadly as it sounds. Rules for movement, combat, spotting, target painting, indirect fire, limited flight (using jet-packs), and robot drones for fighting, spotting, and mass destruction are included. Optional rules for command control augment the morale rules, and the rule about suit integrity makes the battlefield even more hellish. The game moves quickly and precisely. ECM, rather than armor plating, decides who survives and who dies. Against a heavy weapon, no one is safe.

BATTLESUIT, the first version of which was published in TSG 59, achieves what it set out to do: Show small-unit combat in the world of ***Ogre/G.E.V.*** and does so excellently. The rules are precise, the counters a trifle larger than usual for handling, and the line of sight rules, although a bit complex, are incredibly accurate.

I wish that the map had been as nice as the ***Ogre/G.E.V.*** maps; the brown-on-green creation is not worthy of Denis Loubet, the artist. And where are the vehicles, the pride and joy (and main-stay) of the armies of 2085? Not more than one mention is made of them (although I am told that SJ Games plans to put out an expansion set adding vehicles).

In all, BATTLESUIT quite accurately represents one hex of overrun combat from ***G.E.V.***, and is just as deadly. For those who would follow the progress of the world of 2085, this game is a must.

– Craig Sheeley

DRAGON RAGE (Heritage / Dwarfstar); $4.95. Designed by Lewis Pulsipher. 11½" x 14" full-color mapboard, 24-page rulebook, one damage record sheet, 154 full-color counters, two dice. Two players; playing time one to four hours. Published 1982.

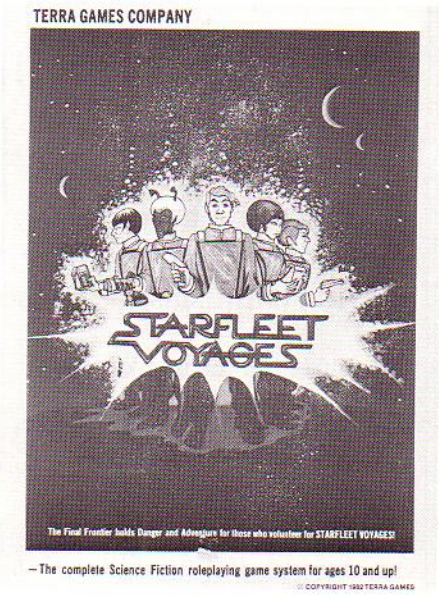
In DRAGON RAGE, various groups of creatures, including Dragons, Giants, Goblins, and the omnipresent Orcs, try to break into a walled city. They seek to avenge the wanton destruction of some Dragon eggs by a few thoughtless city dwellers. The sequence of play is very straightforward. The invaders and the city-dwellers follow the same player-turn sequence of spell casting, movement, missile fire, and melee. Movement is quite simple, since all hexes have a movement point value of 'one.' How far a unit moves depends on how many movement points it's allotted; the only exceptions are 'road travel' which is faster, and walls and gates – walls must be scaled and gates smashed, and therein lies the suspense. The different invaders have different scaling and smashing abilities, while Dragons and Rocs can fly right over the wall. There are some interesting touches . . . Giants can walk on river hexes (due to their height), Dragons whose legs have been destroyed can 'slither,' and bridges can be ruined as a last resort. Combat is in two modes. Normal troop and missile combat is resolved by dividing the defender's strength into the attacker's strength. That number is the number that must be rolled on a single die to eliminate the defender. Monsters are attacked by rolling a die to determine a hit (usually a 5 or 6) and, if hit, the monster suffers a damage point loss equal to its attacker's strength. Wizards have a handful of spells, but magic is not an important factor in the game. The invaders win by occupying and destroying key positions which yield victory points.

DRAGON RAGE is a step in the right direction. It offers a deceptively simple game system that provides exciting play and a realistic feel. The rules for scaling and smashing can make the siege quite suspenseful. David Helber's map is especially attractive.

One problem I experienced in playing was the relative ease of hacking at a Dragon's legs and immobilizing him. The first scenario, with just two Dragons, didn't really test the city's mettle. On the other hand, the scenarios that featured Giants, Orcs, Goblins and Trolls had the defenders running left and right to stem the tide. A Giant, though, seemed too vulnerable.

DRAGON RAGE is a worthwhile game. To some extent, I felt like I was playing out a tactical skirmish from Chaosium's ***Dragon Pass***. RAGE is an intriguing game, drawing you back for another go and it's a quick setup. One can only bemoan the passing of Heritage and the Dwarfstar line of games.

– Matthew J. Costello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STARFLEET VOYAGES (Terra Games); $17.00. Designed by "Michael Scott." One 8½" x 11" 74-page rulebook (with errata slips), two 8½" x 11" light cardstock template sheets,

character sheets, starship data sheets and dice, boxed. Published 1982.

STARFLEET VOYAGES is something of an oddity. It's obviously an effort to capitalize on the renewed interest in *Star Trek* adventure gaming that's followed *Star Trek II*, while avoiding the high licensing fees associated with any "official" *Star Trek* game. The heart of the rules is a reprint of the old Heritage *Star Trek* RPG of several years back, with some extra material on skills, Star Fleet organization, ranks and uniforms, plus updates from the two movies, all with the specific character names omitted. Thus Kirk is now "Captain," Spock is "Vulcan Science Officer," McCoy is "Chief Surgeon," etc. (though the Klingon, Romulan and Kzinti sample characters retain their original names). The section on starflight seems to be a modification of Gamescience's ***Star Fleet Battle Manual*** with some adaptations from the same company's ***Star Patrol*** for system and planetary data generation. What is really odd (or not so odd, depending on your viewpoint), is that the designer of STARFLEET VOYAGES is listed as Michael Scott, a *nom de plume* of SFBM and ***Star Patrol*** designer Michael Scott *Kurtick*.

What's good about STARFLEET VOYAGES is that it brings back into print the original *Star Trek* RPG rules, which were not a bad little system. Nearly every piece of equipment, weapon, ship, race or creature from the regular and animated series is covered at least briefly, with updates in this edition from the movies (with the obvious exceptions of V'ger and the Genesis Device) – more than are covered in FASA's official *Star Trek* RPG. Another thing SV has that the FASA set doesn't is a system for determining interstellar distances for the purpose of in-flight time, which should please those concerned with such details.

Unfortunately, the game suffers from *very* poor production, coupled with a relatively high price for what it contains. The rules are reproduced from typewritten copy, several pages of which were faded into near-obscurity in my copy, with a fair amount of typos. The paper which the rules and character and ship data sheets are printed on appears to be merely a high-grade newsprint. The ship silhouettes on the templates are crudely printed, too. The worst flaw in the rules concerns generation of a character's Hand-to-Hand class; this was omitted in the Heritage edition, and STARFLEET VOYAGES has failed to take the opportunity to explain it. A half-sentence insert on it only serves to confuse the issue further.

If you own the Heritage *Star Trek* rules, ***Star Patrol***, and the SFBA, I see no reason to waste $17 on the couple of pages of new material in STARFLEET VOYAGES. Even if you don't have all or any of the three, unless you just *have* to have every *Star Trek*-related game in print, I'd still recommend passing on this one and going the extra amount for the FASA ***Star Trek*** game.

– William A. Barton

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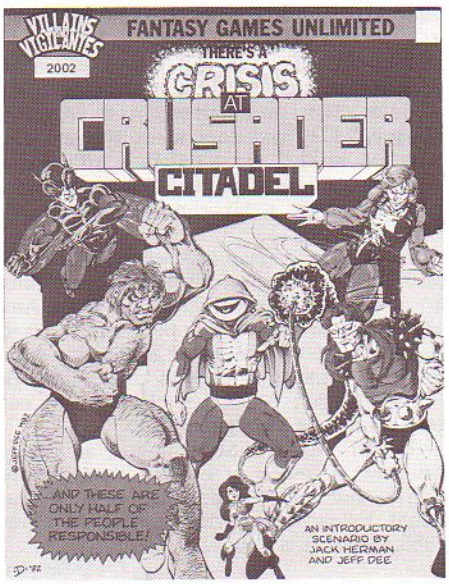


CRISIS AT CRUSADER CITADEL (FGU); $5.00. Designed by Jack Herman and Jeff Dee. One 8½" x 11" 20-page book. For GM and about six players; playing time indefinite. Published 1982.

CRISIS AT CRUSADER CITADEL is an introductory adventure for FGU's superhero RPG, ***Villains and Vigilantes***, and is sold both as a separate scenario and as part of the boxed edition of the revised ***V&V***. Unlike FGU's two previous ***V&V*** scenarios, CRISIS is designed only for use with the revised game system; those players using the original rules will have to make their own conversions for this one. The plot centers around the disappearance of the Crusaders, the area's prime superhero group, and a resulting crime wave by the supervillainous Crushers. The players are all new superheroes who meet at Crusader Citadel to apply for membership. There they learn of the Crusaders' disappearance and are enlisted to stop the Crushers from hitting their next target, Manning Enterprises. If the heroes are successful in this, it may lead then to a superbattle with the remaining Crushers in the very heart of Crusader Citadel for possession of a supercomputer. The scenario includes maps for both Manning Enterprises and Crusader Citadel, along with ***V&V*** stats fot NPCs – it doesn't require a lot of trickiness or devious thinking, just a couple of good old superhero/villain bashes. It could also be fun for a group of experienced players who just want to get involved in a good fight. The NPCs, villains and heroes alike, are nicely characterized and could prove useful in almost any other scenario. The possibility of some of the Crusaders showing up to aid the players will help balance the game if too many villains escape the first part of the scenario. And the plans for Crusader Citadel, are excellent as a guide for players in creating their own superhero headquarters.

I did find the several-page description of all the rooms in Manning Enterprises a bit tedious, since there is little there of real value. The notes on structural points for the walls, doors, etc., are okay, but there was a lot of extraneous details that could have been left for the GM to work out.

Overall, though, CRISIS AT CRUSADER CITADEL is a fine introduction to ***V&V*** and could be mined for ideas for any of the other superhero systems on the market.

– William A. Barton

DARKLING SHIP (Judges Guild); $3.98. Designed by Dave Sering. Approved for use with ***Traveller***. One 8½ x 11" 32-page book. For four to seven players; playing time indefinite. Published 1982.

DARKLING SHIP is Judges Guild's latest approved ***Traveller*** adventure, the third in the Border Prowler series, following ***Amycus Probe*** and ***Rogue Moon of Spinstorm***. This adventure concerns the search for and discovery of a 25 million-ton (yes, that's *million*) generation ship by the crew of the commando transport, *Hrunta*. Going on clues obtained in the previous scenarios (contained in a Mission Briefing for those who haven't played the earlier adventures), the *Hrunta* must scan several star systems in the Satyressia and Darkling subsectors of the Ley and Glimmerdrift sectors, respectively, for signs of the intruders who built the bases in ***Amycus*** and ***Spinstorm***. The discovery of a body in space with a magazine containing an article on generation ships may lead the *Hrunta* to the ship of the adventure's title. Included in the book are details on, and deck plans of, an old abandoned asteroid workboat and the huge generation ship itself, with keys and explanations, space encounter tables and data on the various systems, and many artifacts to be found in each. Also provided are a map of the region to be explored, and several pregenerated characters with equipment.

DARKLING SHIP is probably the best of the three in the Border Prowler series, in terms of completeness and how much is provided for the price of the scenario ($2 less than previous JG adventures – most likely due to the dropping of the gaudy color illustrations that plagued its predecessors). It offers several items of interest, particularly the ***Striker***-designed grav scooters and the library data info on the Kancers, a crablike (what else?) alien race native to the quadrant. The Bussard-powered generation ship is certainly different enough from the generation ship in FASA's ***Fate of the Sky Raiders*** to give some variety to those who may play both adventures. And the possibility of pirate activity during the search should enliven that part of the adventure.

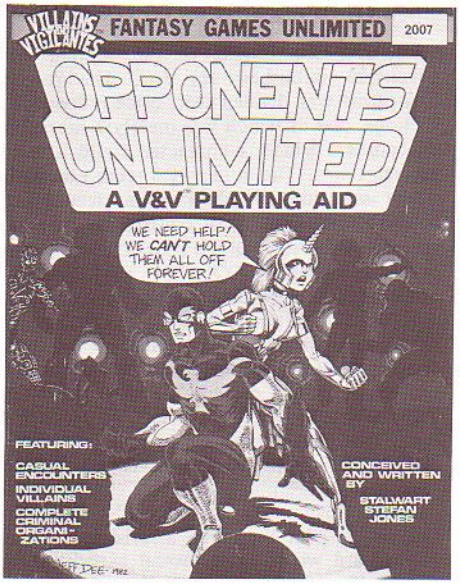
DARKLING SHIP suffers somewhat from its organization. For example, the actions of two NPCs are discussed in the scenario several pages before the explanation of who they are and their part in the adventure. Also, it is quite difficult to visualize the layout of the generation ship from the text description and drawings. This is mainly due to a faulty rendition of the front view of the hexagonal rim of the ship. Once I ignored this drawing and put the others and the text together in my mind, I had it – but until then, whew! Aside from these and some typos, however, the main problem of the adventure is that it's really rather dull. After getting past the possibilities of pirates and space encounters (some of which have to be tinkered with to work), once you're in the ship, there's not much there to find! The whole main focus of the adventure becomes anticlimactic compared to its buildup.

If you don't mind adding some extra encounters, etc. during the exploration of the vessel, DARKLING SHIP may be salvageable – and could even be turned into an interesting adventure. However, I hope the next in the series (yes, there are loose ends left in this one, too) will have a bit more action in the offering.

–William A. Barton

OPPONENTS UNLIMITED (FGU); $5. Designed by Stefan Jones. One 8½" x 11" 26-page book. Published 1982.

OPPONENTS UNLIMITED, a play aid for FGU's ***Villains & Vigilantes*** superhero RPG, is primarily a book of supervillains for use in ***V&V***, similar in nature to the ***Enemies*** books for ***Champions***. The book is divided into three sections: a brief two-page section on encounters,



each ranging from a single sentence to several paragraphs; one on several freelance opponents that ***V&V*** superheroes might have to face; and the largest, on evil organizations, their hideouts, and the various supervillains that belong to them. Each opponent is completely outlined in ***V&V*** statistics and terms, including notes on origins, powers, motives, and quirks. The organizations are described in terms of members, goals, and resources, and the headquarters of each is mapped out and fully explained in case heroes wish to infiltrate or otherwise enter the premises.

The obvious value of a book of opponents for any RPG is its use in those situations when the GM has to come up with an adventure on the spot, with little or no preparation. Many of the pregenerated NPCs in OPPONENTS UNLIMITED will serve adequately in such a situation; for example, the Shroud, with his darkness control and ability to summon spectres or zombies, the dimension-travelling Sgt. Ramble, or the aquatic Wavemistress could offer interesting opposition to a group of heroes. The headquarters maps of the organizations prove useful in various scenarios, too, even if their owners aren't involved. And Jeff Dee's illustrations, as always, add much to the comic book "feel" of the product.

There are, however, problems with OPPONENTS UNLIMITED. Most of the encounters offered are so brief or vague that, with the exception of the Komodo dragons, the robotoids, and the Prankster encounters, which give stats for the antagonists, they are next to useless. Such short ideas work in an adventure framework (as in GDW's ***Twilight's Peak***), but alone, with nothing to which to relate, they don't provide enough info for a GM to work with. Also, the majority of the villains and organizations presented in the book are too tongue-in-cheek or just downright ludicrous to be of use in most "serious" superhero campaigns: the pie-throwing Prankster, Ben Jahmoka and his ice cream truck, the Amazing Floop Brothers, Sir Lemur (an intelligent lemur, of course), Rocket Ma'am, and Proditor Cappella, a "Greatest American Hero" rip-off, to name a few. This is not to say that some tongue-in-cheek humor isn't a good thing in a campaign from time to time, but when a good half of the book's opponents are in this mold, it certainly reduces its value, unless your entire campaign is farcical from start to finish.

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Though its usefulness is lessened by its excessive silliness, OPPONENTS UNLIMITED could be of value to those *V&V* GMs who don't have time to create their own villains and don't mind tossing opponents named Cosmic Zoom, who wear deep-sea diver's gear, at their heroes. I guess it all depends on which comics you read.

–William A. Barton

SCORPION HALL (Chaosium); ***RuneQuest*** SoloQuest 2. Designed by Alan LaVergne. 96-page rulebook. For solitaire play. Published 1982.

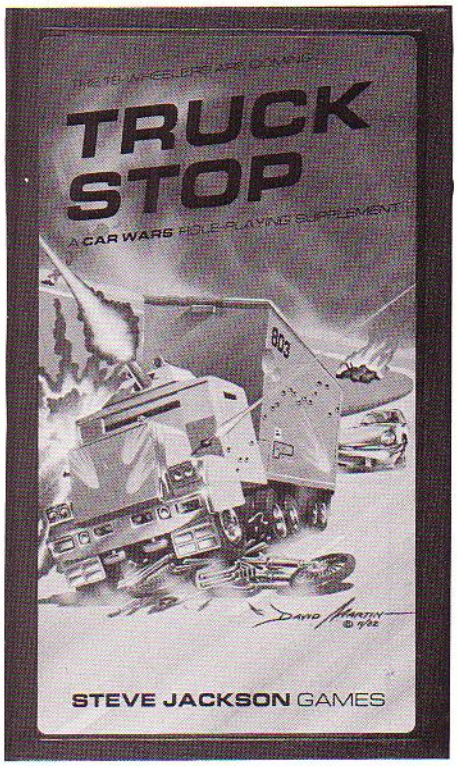
SCORPION HALL is the second solo adventure published for ***RQ***. The original ***SoloQuest*** was divided into three independent sections, one of which was merely a succession of combats which a character could attempt several times. The other two were essentially riddle situations which a player would only attempt once (unless, of course, the character gets killed too early in the course for it to make much difference). SCORPION HALL, on the other hand, is a single adventure which a player may enter as often as he likes, using the same character if desired. It is implied by the introductory material, however, that sooner or later the character will die and the next adventurer will have to be a tougher sort. Beyond that, there is no guide given as to how powerful a character it is appropriate to start with. I doubt that any beginning character, even rolled up with "five years experience," will get too far, and suspect that even a lavishly equipped Rune Lord would need several expeditions to thoroughly explore the Hall – and he'd still be none too sure of surviving all the encounters.

An interesting aspect of this adventure is its consistency. An action resolved in a given room may result in a different encounter, if any at all, the next time a character enters that room. Foes who are slain are gone, though they may be replaced by others. Those not slain are allowed experience rolls that can alter their stats for future encounters, and they can obtain treasure from defeated player-characters. Some of this is accomplished within the flow of the adventure, but some require the player to make notes or alterations to paragraphs in the book.

SH has some flaws, chiefly regarding time lags between visits. This is usually in the form of "if action A takes place, then after one month event B occurs," when, in other parts of the book, it is made clear that event B has occurred within hours, if not minutes, of action A. This requires ad hoc adjustments by the player if he should return after a game-time lapse of, for example, one week.

In general, SCORPION HALL is well-constructed and extremely challenging. It cannot be fully explored in any one session. While not infinite, it contains many sessions' worth of play value, and in the event a player does exhaust its possibilities (and probably a stable of characters in the process), it remains an extremely good guide for running a refereed adventure.

– Steve List



TRUCK STOP (Steve Jackson Games); $5.00. Designed by Steve Jackson. Supplement to ***Car Wars***. 24-page rules booklet, vehicle record sheet, 37 full-color counters, 21" by 32" map, ziplock bag for counters, plastic Pocket Box. Number of players: infinite (two to eight work best); playing time indefinite. Published 1983.

TRUCK STOP adds 18-wheel rigs to the wild world of ***Car Wars***. Along with rules for the construction and purchase of tractor-trailor rigs, buses and heavy RVs are also added to the numbers of dreadnaughts roaming the highways of 2033. Also included are detailed rules for maneuvering the big rigs, arming and armoring oversized vehicles, boarding them from above or from the side (a la ***Road Warrior***), and what happens when one of the behemoths hits a smaller vehicle. New rules for character generation and skills for characters are presented, as well as how to repair ventilated vehicles. Information on trucker ethics, a medical plan that goes beyond Red / Blue Cross and a detailed map of a typical truck stop round out the supplement.

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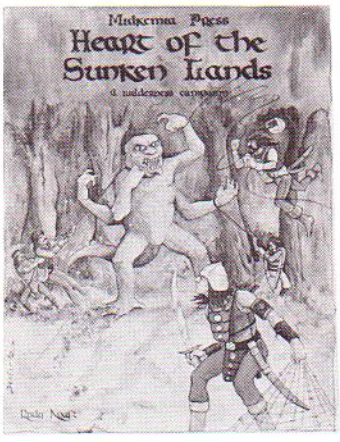

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The physical quality is superb. Denis Loubet's counters are works of art. The rules on vehicle maintenance have been long awaited. The new weapons include a heavier laser and a tank gun. New turret designs and stats are quite useful. But the crowning touch is a small glossary of trucker terms, including such phrases as 'pizza truck' (ambulance), and 'Polish air force' (helicopters and/or crews).

The only things lacking from ***Truck Stop*** are rules on the intermediate trucks: Dumptrucks, garbage trucks, etc – anything bigger than a pickup but smaller than a semi.

Car Wars players have been waiting for this ever since the game came out, and their wait is justified. If you liked the movie *Road Warrior,* if you like the idea of an unstoppable convoy, if you just like the idea of armed rigs, get this. But you must have ***Car Wars*** to use it.

– Criag Sheeley

Play Aids

MORROW PROJECT ROLE PLAYING EXPANSION AND PERSONAL AND VEHICULAR BASIC LOADS (Timeline); $6.95. Designed by H.N. Voss. One 8½" x 11" 6-page booklet, five SP/BP Breakdown sheets, four character sheets, six personal basic load sheets, nine vehicular basic load sheets. Published 1983.

For those ***Morrow Project*** players and project directors who always wanted to know how to determine whether a character knew a certain fact, could repair a certain item, or could carry out a task, Timeline has released THE MORROW PROJECT ROLE PLAYING EXPANSION AND PERSONAL AND VEHICULAR BASIC LOADS supplement. This package consists of copies of all the basic loads for Morrow personnel and vehicles, with silhouettes of the vehicles or main weapon in the load in question at the top of each; a set of computer-generated breakdowns of structural points for each part of the body based on the overall SP rating; and a booklet on determining what skills and degrees TMP personnel possess, along with a new character sheet for marking skill levels with all other pertinent information. The new skill system is, as the booklet acknowledges, based on that used by Chaosium in its ***RuneQuest/ Basic Role-Playing*** systems. Skills are rated as a percent which can range from 5% to 100%. Many of the familiar Chaosium skills, especially those in the degree and knowlege areas as in ***Call of Cthulhu***, are represented, along with particular Morrow skills such as driving and repairing MP vehicles and skill in the weaponry used by the Project. Die rolls are provided for determing whether or not a character is a military or combat veteran, based on which type of team he is assigned to, and what type of degree he has received – Bachelor's, Master's or Ph.D. Degree areas are up to the PD or players to determine. Based chances are provided for skills, based on whether the character is in a Mars, Recon or Science team, and can be increased (or decreased) by prior military training and the values of certain character stats. A new stat, Intelligence, is added, and an old one, Accuracy, removed in favor of percentile chances to hit based on skill level.

Several components in this package should prove of use to ***Morrow*** fans. The SP breakdown charts will save a lot of time in figuring out these values, and it's helpful having the silhouettes of the vehicles and weapons right on the basic load sheets. The degree areas in the rules seem adequate in their descriptions, and the fact that most TMP members have at least 10% training in all degree areas (except the various medical skills that require specific degree work) gives every team at least a chance to have the necessary knowledge in any scenario.

Unfortunately, there are some flaws in the rulebook, most of them relating to combat. Some players probably won't like the loss of Accuracy, since it gave characters up to a perfect base chance to hit (with an average of 50%), while under the new system, the best even a Mars team member starts out with on any weapon is 40% – and only if he's a combat vet with Dex of 18+. Furthermore, no skill areas have been provided for any hand-to-hand combat except knife or bayonet, leaving unarmed combat, or fighting with clubs, etc., up to the PD to figure out on his own. Certain obvious skills such as Demolitions have been omitted – odd, considering that all teams have at least one demo pack. The base chance for Rifle skill was forgotten, too, though the skill itself is included. And simply altering combat modifiers from +1 or 4 in the old system to +10 or +40 as the new rules instruct will give modifiers twice as high in D100 terms as they were in D20. Also, while modifiers are provided for the new Intelligence stat, nowhere is one told exactly to which skills these may be applied, though I assume the degree areas and knowledge skills are among them.

If you prefer the original ***Morrow*** system, or you've already adapted a skill system from another game, you may not find this supplement worth buying. If not, you may wish to look into the TMP RP EXPANSION – but be ready to cover its gaps yourself.

– William A. Barton

WRITING REVIEWS FOR *SPACE GAMER* AND *FANTASY GAMER*

Capsule Reviews

Most of the reviews we print will be "capsule" reviews – 400 words or less. We pay $5 for each capsule review accepted. We want to run a review for *every* new SF or fantasy game or supplement.

Each capsule review should be five paragraphs long and contain:

(1) Basic information. Present these facts, in this order: NAME OF GAME (Publisher); price. Designer. (If applicable: "Supplement to ____," "Companion to ____," or similar note.) Format: list of components, with sizes of maps and rulebooks, number of counters, etc. Number of players; playing time. Publication date.

(2) General description of the game: background, the sides, course of play, special features, etc.

(3) Strong points. Discuss what is good about the game; in every game, there *is* something worthwhile. "Fun" is a useless adjective. Be specific.

(4) Weak points. Every game has its problems, too. If the only faults you can find are minor ones, say so. If the game is fatally flawed, come right out and SAY SO. If you can phrase your criticisms as suggestions for improvement, do so.

(5) Summation. Your overall opinion of the game. Who should and should not buy it, and why. Is the game worth its price?

All reviews must be signed; the reviewer's name *will* be printed. No game may be reviewed by its designer, by a playtester, or by an employee of the publisher. (Designer's articles are welcome, but must be billed as such!) Final note: If you can write a complete review in less than the full 400 words, by all means do so.

This review format is designed to encourage fairness and to give the reader enough information to let him decide whether he wants to buy that game. Keep that in mind when you write. This is a short review, *not* a complete analysis. For those who want to write longer reviews, each issue will have one or two –

Featured Reviews

These will be game reviews 1,000 to 2,000 words long. They should contain *all the above information,* plus whatever else the reviewer wants to say. They may be written in any format. A featured review may cover either a new game or one that has been on the market for some time. If we have not already printed a capsule review, write one and submit it at the same time.

Publications

THE ORACLE (Horizon International, Inc.) $1.50 cover price, $8 for 8 issues. 5½" x 8" 32-page magazine. Published 1982.

ORACLE was an amateur/semi-pro magazine covering *D&D*-type role-playing games. It had impressive graphics and artwork and competent editing, which made it superior to most amateur 'zines. Much of the artwork consisted of excellent reproduction of photographs. Some of the content was done by well-known professionals in the hobby.

Its content was a *Dragon* clone: new character class, magic sword, and six pages of cartoon. It also had extensive (12 pages) reviews of books, PBM games, films, and amateur 'zines. ORACLE had potential.

But the magazine ceased publication with issue number 3. If I may guess why, I'd say: (1) Despite the artwork, the content didn't fill any needs which existing publications didn't fill. (2) It failed to advertise effectively. (3) It had unrealistic expectations of growth in circulation, which were compounded by the failure to advertise. (4) Its high production costs (remember all that artwork) and few subscribers meant they spent all all the cash.

To sum it up: bad management and no marketing judgement.

– Ian L. Straus

Gameable Movies

BLUE THUNDER (Columbia Pictures). Directed by John Gadham. Produced by Gordon Carroll. Screenplay by Dan O'Bannon and Andrew Fogelson. Music by Arthur B. Rubinstein. Cast: Roy Scheider (Murphy), Warren Oates (Braddock), Candy Clark (Kate), Malcolm McDowell (Cochrane). Released 1983.

Stuffed full of heart-stopping moments, BLUE THUNDER is one of the most exciting films of the last ten years. The scene is Los Angeles. First we are introduced to the LA police helicopter patrols. Following Murphy (Roy Scheider) and his partner, we get a taste of helicopter police work, and of what a good team these two are. Enter into the picture Blue Thunder, the code name of the military's newest anti-terrorism weapon, the ultimate warcopter.

Murphy is to be its testpilot, picked by his boss, Braddock (Warren Oates). The military, represented by an officer Murphy knew in Vietnam, distrusts him, and does not want him to test the Thunder over the city. Braddock supports Murphy. During the testing, Murphy and his partner begin to put together the facts they have, and discover that Blue Thunder is not being prepared as an anti-terrorism device as much as it is being readied to control the American people.

The idea of a fleet of Thunders patrolling America to keep its citizens in line is a chilling proposition. Murphy decides to go public with the information. Before he and his partner can act, though, his partner is killed, and Murphy is forced into hiding. Taking chances, he decides to steal the Blue Thunder and turn over the information he has to the media in the hope of discrediting the military program which created it – before the Thunder can be used on the residents of Watts. This leads to a grand climax with Murphy battling everything the goverment can throw at him. The ensuing battles, with the Thunder combatting helicopters and jet fighters, are everything the audience could hope for.

Everything about BLUE THUNDER is topnotch. The plot is precise and thought-provoking. The acting is superlative, with Warren Oates stealing the show. The musical score is tight; never overshadowing the action, it stays in the background, helping to build every moment to its climax. There are no problems in the editing or photography, both of which are nearly state-of-the-art. This movie would provide for an exciting background of adventures for espionage role-playing games, and the Blue Thunder could be written up as a formidable piece of equipment for any contemporary or post-holocaust role-playing game.

BLUE THUNDER is this year's must-see action film. See it.

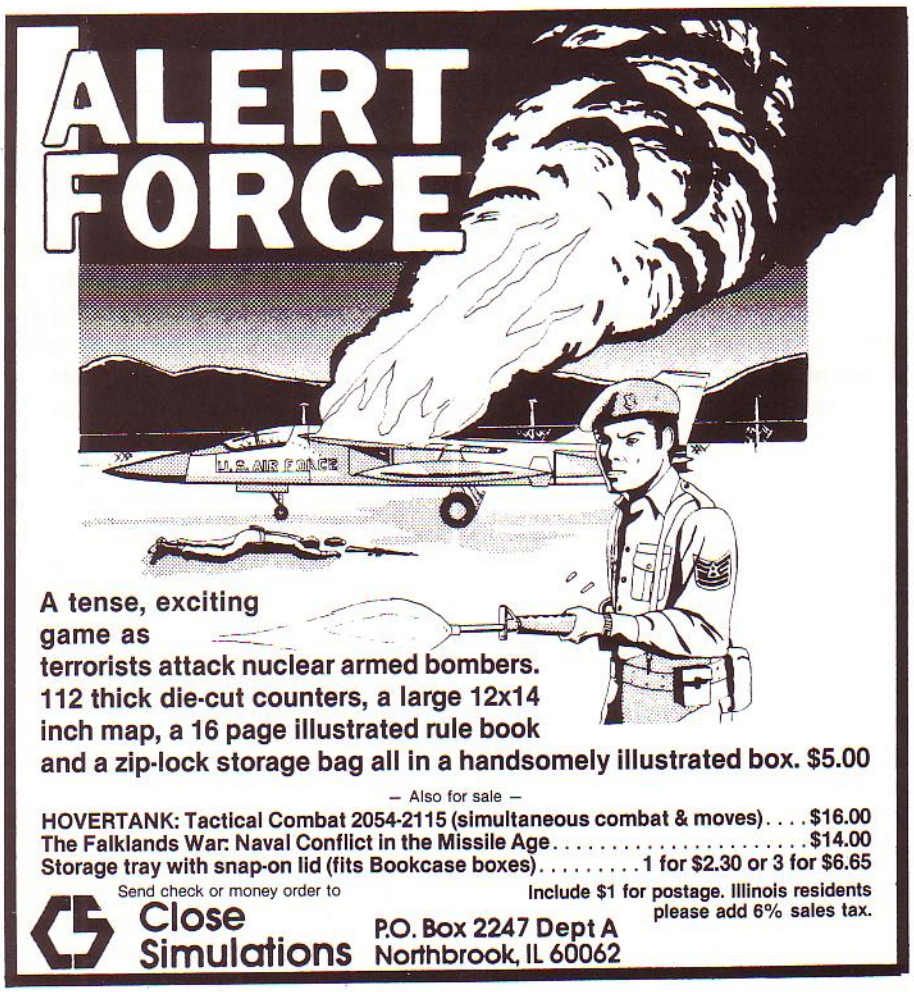
– C.J. Henderson

HIGH ROAD TO CHINA (Warner Brothers). Directed by Brian G. Hutton. Produced by Fred Weintraub. Screenplay by S. Lee Pogostin and Sandra W. Roland. Music by John Barry. Cast: Tom Selleck (O'Malley), Bess Armstrong (Eve), Jack Weston (Struts), Willford Brimley (Bradley Tozer), Robert Morley (Bentik), Brian Blessed (Suleiman Khan). Released 1983.

Warner Brothers' new HIGH ROAD TO CHINA advertises itself as if it were *Raiders of the Lost Ark II*; do not be fooled. Although many things are right with this one, just as many are wrong.

In HIGH ROAD, Eve, a spoiled socialite, discovers that if she does not get her father to a British court within 12 days, she will lose everything she has. The last word on her missing dad is five years old. She is in Istanbul, and he disappeared on the other side of Afghanistan. The only way to get where she has to go and get back in time is by plane, and the only planes around belong to a drunken ex-ace, Patrick O'Malley. Eve hires him; they, along with Struts, O'Malley's trusted aide and mechanic, fly off to find Daddy. One plane is destroyed, and Struts is left behind while Eve and O'Malley press on. They find Daddy, discover there was no reason for the trip in the first place, and fall in love, and thus ends the picture.

HIGH ROAD TO CHINA is not the action-adventure thriller it purports to be. It is a weak, at times senseless love story with only a dash of movement here and there to keep the pace plodding along. The action sequences, few and far between, are tired, slow little scenes which do not bolster the film's languid pace. O'Malley never really becomes a hero. He plods along, inebriated most of the time, letting Struts take care of him, following orders or rebelling against them as the mood strikes. Although Selleck is surprisingly good in the part, the



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things he is forced to do by the script keep O'Malley two-demensional from beginning to end. Eve and Struts are given much more to do; unfortunately, neither is the story's main character.

As for gamability, there is perhaps something of use for pulp-era RPGs like *Daredevils* – but the viewer will find better elsewhere.

Unless one is looking for a pleasant, harmless, non-sexy, non-violent, disinteresting film to take the grandparents to its best to pass this one by.

– C.J. Henderson

VIDEODROME (Universal Studios). Directed by David Cronenberg. Produced by Claude Heroux. Photography by Mark Irwin. Make-up Special Effects by Rick Baker. Starring James Woods (Max Renn) and Deborah Harry (Nicki Brand). Released 1983.

The story, impossible to explain fully in capsule form, goes as follows: Cable TV station co-owner Max Renn needs more product for his violence-and-pornography-loving audience. Max finds out about a new show, *Videodrome*, which looks like the bloody, sadistic answer to his prayers. The closer he gets to the show, however, the less it looks like a program and the more it looks like reality. With the help of pop-psychogist Nicki Brand, Max finds *Videodrome* – or, more to the point, it finds him. Max discovers that the people behind the show have been using him all along, waiting for the moment when they could reel him in as their puppet. Max soon finds that *Videodrome* is not a program – it is a technological breakthrough which makes viewers mutate, causing them to hallucinate and take on new abilities. Like all Cronenberg pictures, this is not ordinary film fare.

Despite the fact that VIDEODROME came and went faster than Superman and his bullet, it is still an excellent picture. It is a genre film of high caliber, posing a number of important questions. Max is the hero; he peddles smut and violence. Nicki is a psychologist people turn to for help; she is also a sadomasochistic punchingbag interested only in people who treat her violently. Television is supposed to be the most powerful medium in our age, and yet most of the characters use it for all the worst reasons. At first, nothing in the film seems all that disturbing – but the more you think about it, the more disturbing it becomes.

The high-tech aspects of the film, coupled with the all-powerful and far-reaching conspiracy behind the *Videodrome* program, would make for a fascinating set of adventures for characters in espionage or superhero role-playing games. However, it could provide for a depressingly grim campaign.

Though the film is now gone from most theatres, don't miss it if it's rereleased or airs on HBO. Although possesseed of some faults, it's one of the best SF/horror films made.

–C.J. Henderson

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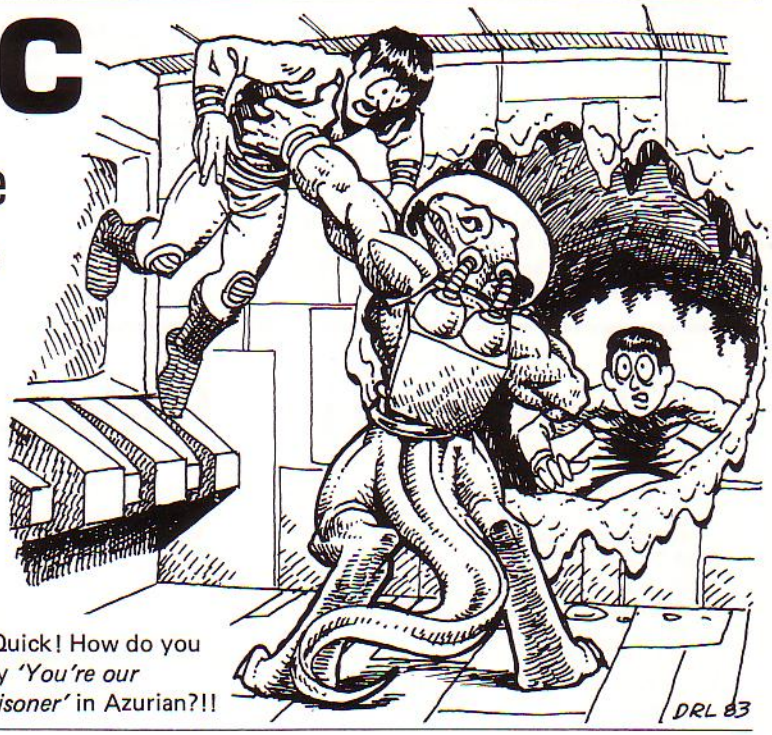

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SCANNER: NEWS FROM THE WORLD OF ADVENTURE GAMING

Metagaming Ceases Operations

Metagaming, the long-time producer of *Microgame*® minigames, has ceased operations effective the beginning of April. The company will be selling rights to its line of boardgames and ***The Fantasy Trip***-related line of products.

"Effective right now, Metagaming Concepts Inc. has ceased marketing and production services," confirmed Metagaming president Howard Thompson. "It's basically a decision on my part," he added. "It [boardgame production] hasn't been fun for me for a couple of years."

Thompson intends to take the revenues generated from the sale of existing game stock and game rights and return to the field in a year or so as a producer of computer game software.

The Journal of 20th Century Wargaming has been returned to Nick Schuessler, its editor. *Interplay* is being sold to a group in Irving, TX. ***Treasure of Unicorn Gold*** is up for sale with the company's other titles, but Metagaming will retain responsibility for the prize; anyone finding the unicorn, regardless of who owns the game title, will be able to collect the prize from Metagaming.

News Briefs

Moore Leaves TSR for Victory Games

Ex-SPI staffer Michael Moore has left his position as editor-in-chief of *Strategy and Tactics* and *Ares* at TSR to take a position with Victory Games. "There are no hard feelings at all," said Moore. "I'm just not a small-town person. The magazines are up and running, I've got two good managing editors, and I want to get back to New York." Moore will be doing game editing, marketing, and PR work. At TSR, *S&T* assistant editor Charles Ramsay will now be managing that magazine; ex-*Omni* staffer Geoffrey Golson will be managing *Ares*.

In other Victory Games news, John and Trish Butterfield have left that company; John is now working for Coleco, a major computer and arcade-games firm.

***Starfall* PBM Game Planned**

Adventures Design Group, moderators for the PBM game ***Lords of the Dark Horse***, has acquired the rights to Yaquinto's ***Starfall*** for play-by-mail. "It's going to be the boardgame available in a PBM format," stated ADG's Nolan Band. "Possession of the (boxed) game will be a must for playing the game." The PBM ***Starfall*** will be offered in two formats: one package with the Yaquinto boxed version, and another without the boxed game (for players already owning the boxed ***Starfall***). The PBM version is due to begin toward the end of May.

New Software Company Formed

Richard Garriott, aka Lord British, who has been designing computer games for several years, has formed a new software company with five other designers. Origins Systems Inc. will publish arcade and role-playing software and eventually will expand into business and educational software markets. The first releases will include ***Exodus***, third in the ***Ultima*** series of computer role-playing adventures. Garriott and partners Chuck Bueche, Keith Zabalaoui, Ken Arnold, and John Kennedy, are seeking freelance programmers for software game designs.

New & Upcoming Releases

Game Designers' Workshop has released a ***Starter Edition Traveller***. These rules, a streamlined and revised version of ***Traveller***, are for novices and include introductory material and the adventures ***Shadows*** and ***Mission on Mithril***. It will retail for $10.00. Also from GDW is ***Nomads of the World-Ocean***, adventure #9 for ***Traveller***. Set on the waterworld of Bellerophon, it will retail for $5.00. GDW has also released ***Western Desert***. This, the latest release in the *Europa* series, presents an in-depth study of the campaigns in Egypt and Libya, from Tobruk to El Alamein and Tripoli. It is playable independently or as part of the *Europa* series; it costs $15.00.

Droids, a robot role-playing game, has been released by Integral Games. It retails for $7.95. More ***Droids*** products are upcoming.

Infinity Limited has released ***Agent of Death***, Ken St. Andre's novel-length solitaire dungeon adventure supplement for ***Tunnels & Trolls***. It is the longest solo scenario yet published and can be played as one long adventure or three shorter ones. It sells for $3.95.

EPYX/Automated Simulations has introduced ***Jumpman***, a new science fiction computer game. ***Jumpman*** must dodge bullets and battle robots, dragons, and flying saucers in his quest to disarm bombs planted by the Alienators. The game has five difficulty levels, eight speed settings, and a randomizer option that can be used to increase the difficulty. The suggested retail price is $39.95; it is available for the Atari (32K) and the Commodore 64.

Convention Calendar

*April 29-May 1: TREASURE-CON I. SF and gaming con. Contact Treasure-Con I, 306 4th Avenue, Laurel, MT 59044.

April 29-May 1: TRI-STATE CON '83. Gaming con. For information contact Cincinnati Adventure Gamers, 11020 Reading Road, Suite 175, Sharonville, OH 45241, phone 513 / 984-8011.

May 20-22: CWI CON '83. Historical and fantasy gaming con. Contact Chicago Wargaming Inc., P.O. Box 217, Tinley Park, IL 60477.

May 27-30: GRIMCON V. SF and fantasy gaming con. Contact Grimcon P.O. Box 4153, Berkeley, CA 94704.

May 27-29: SWAMPCON-4. SF con. Send SASE to BRSFL-SwampCon, P.O. Box 14238, Baton Rouge, LA 70898.

May 27-29: CONQUEST IV+10. SF con. For information contact ConQuest IV+10, P.O. Box 36212, Kansas City, MO 64111.

May 29: M.I.G.S. IV. A free day of wargaming. Contact Len Scanlan, 473 Upper Wentworth Street, Hamilton, Ontario, Canada L9A 4T6.

June 3-5: DALLCON 83. Gaming con. Contact @ P.O. Box 59899, Dept. 5, Dallas, TX 75229.

June 3-5: WARGAMER'S WEEKEND. Gaming con. Contact Chris' Game and Hobby Shop, 1 Hales Court, Newburyport, MA 01950.

June 10-12: X-CON 7. SF and gaming con. For information, contact X-Con, P.O. Box 7, Milwaukee, WI 53201-0007.

June 17-19: GENGHIS CON V. Gaming con. Contact Denver Gamers Association, P.O. Box 2945, Littleton, CO 80161, phone 303/798-1404.

June 24-26: SEAGA '83 (formerly ASGARD). Gaming con. Contact SEAGA '83, P.O. Box 930031, Norcross, GA 30093.

June 24-26: POLYCON '83. Gaming con. For information contact Society of Wizards and Warriors, P.O. Box 168, Julian A. McPhee U.U. Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo, CA 93407.

June 24-26: EASTCON. SF and gaming con. Send SASE to: EastCon, Box 139, Middletown, NJ 07748.

*July 2-4: TEXCON: 1983. Gaming con. Send SASE to David Ladyman, 8028 Gessner No. 1805, Austin, TX 78753.

*July 14-17: ORIGINS '83. Adventure gaming con. Contact MDG, Origins Events / Info, P.O. Box 656, Wyandotte, MI 48192.

July 15-17: OKON '83 / FILKCON EAST '83. SF cons. Send SASE to P.O. Box 4229, Tulsa, OK 74104.

August 5-7: OMACON 3. SF and gaming con. Contact OmaCon 3, 2518 South 167th Street, Omaha, NE 68130.

August 18-21: GEN CON. Gaming con. Contact Gen Con, c/o TSR Hobbies, P.O. box 756, Lake Geneva, WI 53147.

SJ GAMES and TSG will be attending the conventions marked above with asterisks.

PBM Update

PBM Update reports on professionally-moderated play-by-mail games. Notices are monthly. Copy deadline is 60 days previous to the first of the month, for the issue in which the notice is to appear. (Deadline for the December issue is October 1.) All copy should be typed and double-spaced. Notices should not exceed 200 words in length. TSG reserves the right to edit copy as necessary.

Clements & Associates

Universe II:

Quad I: The quadrant is in turmoil! Asterion has fallen to the Ixtli pirates. Now Arcturus is also under attack by the Ixtli and the Unity Alliance. The attack by Unity was a complete surprise. The Etuel had assumed that, since Unity ships had joined the UES, Unity was an ally.

Quad II: Rumors abound that the peace in this quadrant will soon be shattered by attacks from the Ixtli Empire.

Quad III: The major invasion of the Muar Empire by the CSA alliance is underway. Soon the entire quadrant will be in the hands of the UES.

Quad. IV: UES forces are continuing to probe the outer defenses of the gigantic Muar Empire in this quadrant. So far, the UES Knights have lost no ships.

Regajian Empire: Negotiations between some RSS ships and factions of the Ixtli forces continue. It may be possible to establish peaceful boundaries between the two empires.

Ixtli Empire: With one-fourth of Quadrant I within the boundaries of our empire, our forces are heading toward the center of the quadrant. Soon we will dominate the trade lanes and strangle the Etuel into submission.

Muar Empire: Both of our empires are being invaded by UES ships. Alev is being defended by half of our forces, while the others raid the CSA colony.

Terra II: The number of tribes moving south from the frozen mountains has increased greatly in the past month. As it is summer of 937, the next few weeks are important for preparing to survive the coming winter. Many tribes have made important discoveries that have increased their wealth and power. While individuals have been encoutered, none of the tribes moving south have discovered any cities.

A rumor has spread through the tribes in the area northwest of Diwal that Kaze Musha of the Shadow People sent his cavalry army against the forces of the Venzan tribe. The battle was supposedly fought on the frozen tundra far to the north. It is not known who was victorious.

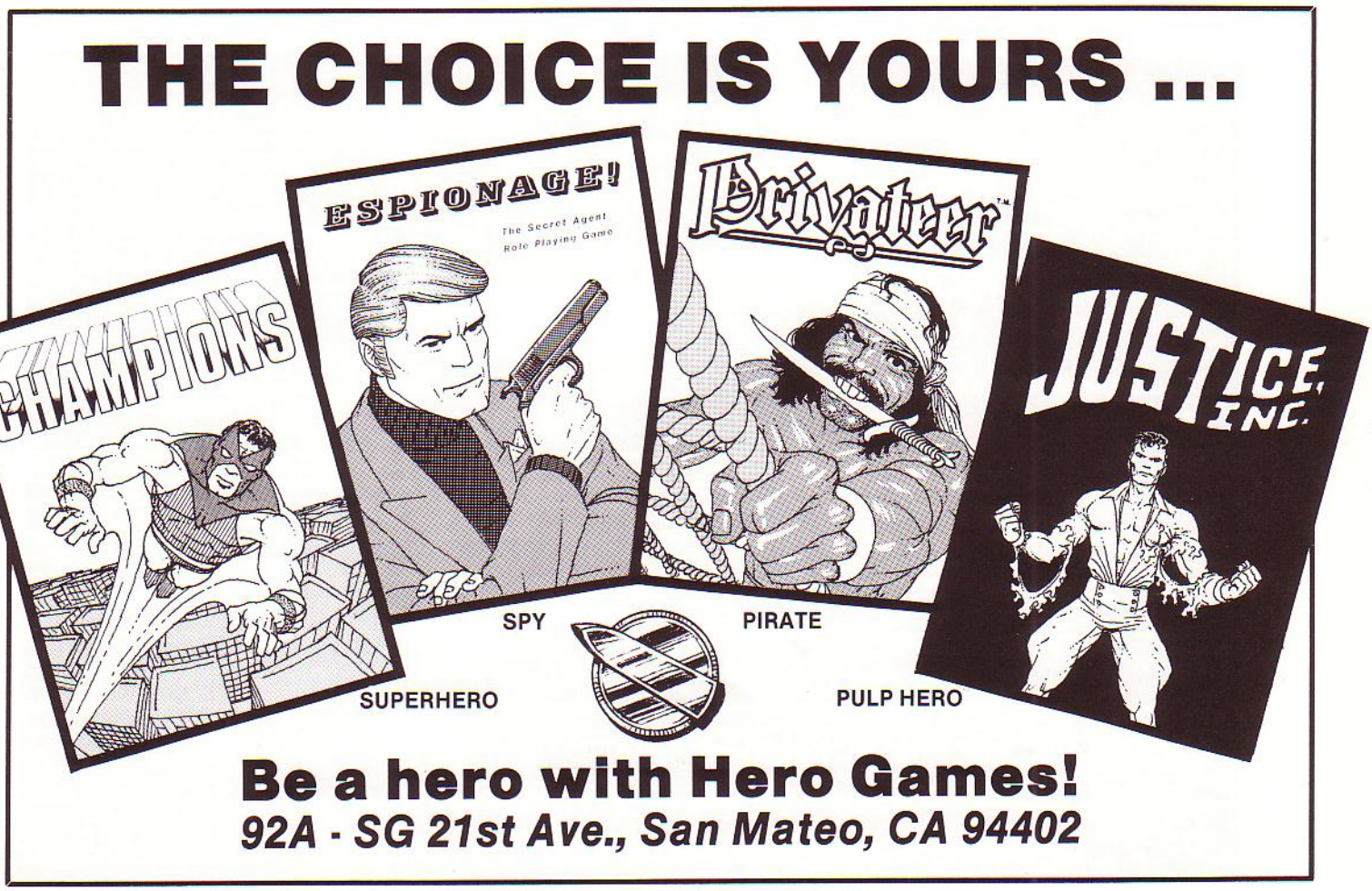
Jon Clemens

Adventures Design Group Inc.

Company News: Turn processing is now in full swing with the same-day processing as the norm. Our initial group of players seem to have had very little trouble adapting to our system. In fact, we have generally found that players actually enjoy coping with the level of realism we have tried to provide.

Lords of the Dark Horse: In the North, the Clans of The People (also known as the Nomads) are stirring to life following centuries of inactivity. The long-foretold signs have been seen and the preparations for the return of The Lords have begun. New leadership has injected new life into these masters of the freezing wastes and momentous changes are in the making for The World.

Elsewhere, life among the Northmen remains



relatively unaffected as the local kings and thanes continue their ageless pursuit of political power and wealth – often at the expense of their neighbors. There have been frequent rumors of increased activity at several of the larger holdings which bodes no good for either the small independent holdings or the teeming trade of the Sothrons. Already one local thane has begun engaging mercenaries to extend the borders of his lands by "any means necessary." Another is supposedly deeply involved in negotiations with the Sothrons. Few will remain untouched by the events now being shaped both north and south of the Great Escarpment.

Nolan Bord

Central Texas Computing

Company News: The press of business has forced us to purchase another 256K Apple III. Unfortunately, the moment we did this, our first one went down for the count. This has slowed up development work on both ***Nomads*** and ***Starcluster***, but hopefully things will be back on track by the time you read this.

Universe III:

Quadrant V: Although several players appear to have allied themselves with the Muar Empire, no concerted action on their part has been reported. Rumor has it that the Ituel consider this a direct threat to planets and are considering action.

Quadrant VI: Terran colonization continues. At least one Terran captain has managed to successfully pass through a black hole, but reports serious damage and crew deaths resulted. The Etuel are rumored to be working on safety devices to reduce colony crew deaths.

Quadrant VII: One Terran captain has managed to make the passage intact from Universe II to ***Universe III.*** A rogue starship reportedly attacked and Explorers' Guild system, but was driven off with heavy losses.

Quadrant VIII: The Etuel refuse to confirm or deny that impact zones are actually Etuel systems enclosed in Dyson Shperes. There is apparently at lease one Sing Nahreu – a drone battlecruiser – loose in the quadrant, which attacks every ship it contacts.

General News: The Etuel are reportedly offering trade concessions to Terran alliances – among them the United Federation, Freeborn Federation, Explorers' Guild, Star Corps, Solar Spice and Liquors, Clave, Triad, Weyrleaders, Interstellar Survey and Trading Company, Land of 02, and Ki Empire (did we miss anyone?)

David Bolduc

Schubel & Son

Company News: Three new games have been released and are currently in operation. They are ***Arena Combat***, a game of gladiatorial combat set in the world of Crane; ***Alien Conflict***, StarMaster races in team or individual combat; and ***Strategic Conflict***, contemporary conflict on a grand scale.

The Tribes of Crane:

Crane I: The war between the Federation of City States and the Rainbow Empire continues to escalate throughout the southern hemisphere. The U.S.P.I.C. has announced that it has joined the war on R.E.'s behalf, bringing the polar city of Twinnest into the conflict. Soon after the declaration, Federation forces descended on the Twinnest access canal and several large battles were fought. The combined U.S.P.I.C. – R.E. forces successfully repulsed the assaults but the canal fort was destroyed and the canal suffered major damage. Elsewhere, R.E. and Federation fleets clashed in the stormy Lower Straits. Both sides, having suffered nearly 70% casualties, chose to withdraw. The Rainbow Empire appears to be winning the war as rumors of the fall of Seam are reported.

Crane II: The Alliance of the High Seas, a newly formed alliance of small but determined tribes, has attacked and captured the small port city of Yug. Under the command of Admiral Akhoc, a dozen lightly equipped sea tribes unloaded from their ships to assault the city. Yug was defended by City Councilperson Agmar, the city warriors and Agmar's Bodyguard. Repeated assaults by the A.H.S. forces eventually overcame the defenders and the city was brutally sacked. It is rumored that the A.H.S. attack group is moving on Vert in a campaign to loot the small cities of the frozen north.

StarMaster:

In the NorthEast Galaxy, Semuanya Rex, supreme being of the reptilian Imperial Dragorn Empire, has forged a tenuous alliance with the New Shapers. The extremely advanced New Shapers posses destructive powers that rival even the Dragorns' strength. The alliance between the Dragorns and the New Shapers represents perhaps the greatest force in existence.

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SPACE GAMER will feature articles, variants, strategy hints, and adventure supplements for science fiction role-playing games like **Traveller** and **Star Trek**, superhero RPGs like **Champions**, sf boardgames like **Ogre** and **Grav Armor**, sf computer games, and sf play-by-mail games like **StarWeb** and **StarMaster**. And you'll still be able to read your favorite features: capsule reviews, Murphy's Rules, and Scanner.

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many others were destroyed in the initial engagements. Only on Klutz # 1, homeworld of the Retnuh was the attack repulsed, but Dragorn reserve fleets are expected to crush this pocket of resistence shortly.

Duane Wilcoxson

Adventures By Mail

Company News: We have just completed our first major expansion. We renovated our existing offices, nearly doubling our floor space. This expansion gives us additional room to run ***Warboid World*** and other games we have in development. We have also recently hired another Gamemaster to process ***Beyond the Stellar Empire***. In keeping with our established policies this new GM is an experienced PBM gamer and a former ***BSE*** player.

Beyond the Stellar Empire:

A joint IAN/ISP task force has put down the prisoner uprising at the ISP penal colony Coupville. This consisted of large-scale space battles involving over 15 ships and a final assault of the prison colony by ground forces. From interrogation of the leaders, the IAN learned the uprising was instigated by RIP loyalists. The revolt started after the former governor had departed from the colony. The governor was a RIP sympathesizer who had infiltrated the Imperial ranks. The governor attempted his escape by hiding among a group of Imperial Marines boarding the ITS *Zoylse*. He was discovered by the starcaptain and was killed in the ensuing violence.

In a related action the IAN *Acme Sun* discovered a RIP base in the Bohr System. A short time later the *Acme Sun* launched an assault that destroyed this base.

The alien Flagritz ships have increased their activity by entering orbit of several well-visited planets. This seems to be a major change from their former hit-and-run tactics. Eight human ships were shot up at MadenJapan and Stormgate-4. The Flagritz rampage was stopped by a GTT fleet operating in the space around Stormgate-4. One Flagritz ship was blown up and two others escaped, towing a disabled human ship.

SMS-STT warfare reached a head with an SMS assault of the GTT colony Vallia. The SMS managed control of Vallia for a short period of time before FTT reenforcements arrived. Several bloody battles followed, resulting in a pyrrhic victory for the GTT forces. Cease-fire negotiations are underway.

Robert Cook, Jack B. Everitt, Michael Poplizio, Steve Hasen, Martha Perry

Graaf Simulations

Company News: We are quite pleased with the enthusiastic response to ***Feudal Lords***. We have now started twelve games of ***Feudal Lords***, eleven of them in the past year. New games are starting aproximately every month.

Game #1, the playtest game, was won on turn 27 by William Paxton with Cheshire. Game #2, a private game of local players, was won by Sue Kerr with Norfolk on turn 15.

We thank the players for their valuable comments and suggestions. Many have been incorporated into the most recent version of the computer program. The addition of a new player order and improved spy results are among the ideas suggested by players. We will continue to consider new ideas for improving the Game.

John Van De Graaf

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ALIEN CONFLICT

Kicking the body of the unconscious Vekkan into a nearby pool of liquid methane, the Psi Demon looked for his teammate. His partner had moved too close to the Minion of Zhodlak and was now entangled in the Minion's tentacles — certain death for the hapless creature. Hefting his spear, the Psi Demon raced to his companion's aid, even as he saw the Minion strike out with a poisoned barb. If his partner perished, he would have to face the Minion alone, a frightening thought. Muscles bulging, the teammate lunged at the Minion, his long spikes goring the Minion even as the powerful poison finished him. Hurt but still mobile, the Minion turned, to continue the **Alien Conflict . . .**

Alien Conflict is a unique correspondence game that allows for interaction between the alien lifeforms of StarMaster, though the game is not restricted to StarMaster players only. Through the use of a powerful computer system, the many details of combat between several alien warriors are brought together. The effects of strength, agility, intelligence, endurance, speed and many other facets of the alien creatures are now interrelated.

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- Design your species' HomeWorld in terms of temperature, atmosphere, mass and terrain.
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- StarMaster players may bet their economic units on matches, with no upper limit on the bet!
- A ranking of aliens is available and will be printed in the Play-by-Mail Gamer (our company newsletter) from time to time.
- A detailed setup results describes the abilities of your warrior and indicates his strengths and weaknesses.

Can your alien defeat a galaxy of champions?

Alien Conflict may be entered for $10.50 which includes the first three turns, setup, rule book and all necessary material. Thereafter, turns are $3.50 each. A rule book may be purchased separately for $3.50.

Send to: **Schubel & Son**
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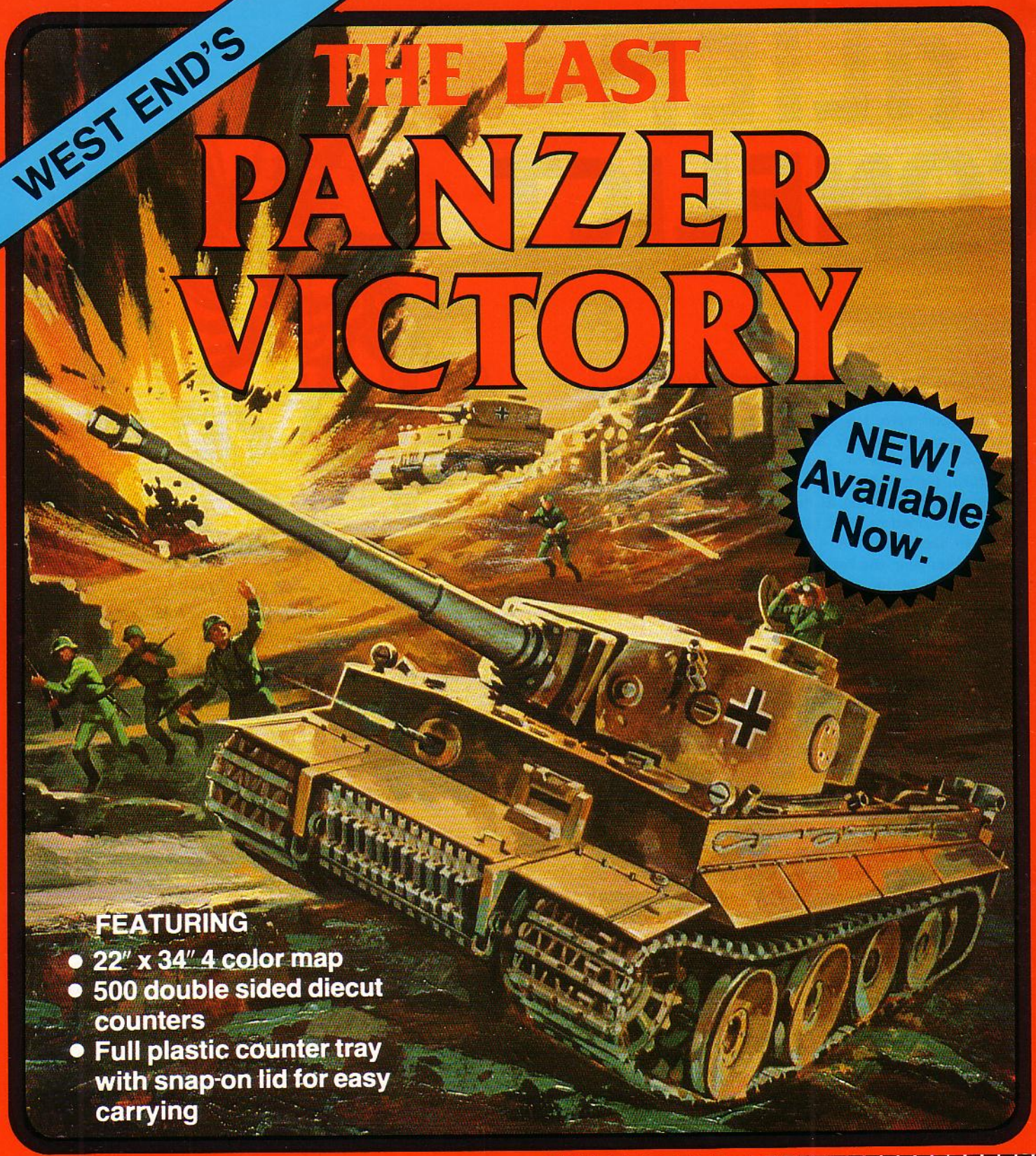

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